

MEDAL OF HONOR MARINE CORPS HERO IN THE PACIFIC

HISTORY WAR



**AMERICA'S UNTOLD
REVOLUTION**

WHY EUROPE REALLY WON
THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

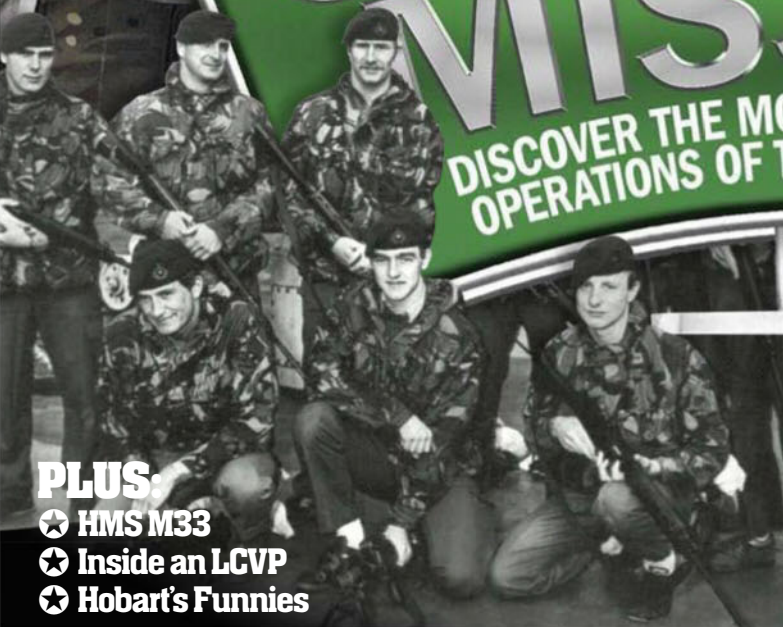
**OPERATION
OVERLORD**

Strategies behind the Allied invasion

20 TOUGHEST

COMMIANDO MISSIONS

DISCOVER THE MOST DARING & DESTRUCTIVE
OPERATIONS OF THE DEADLIEST ELITE FORCE



- PLUS:**
- ★ HMS M33
 - ★ Inside an LCVF
 - ★ Hobart's Funnies

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ISSUE 019



**BATTLESHIP
SHOWDOWN**

HOW JAPAN'S NAVY BLEW THE
RUSSIANS OUT OF THE WATER



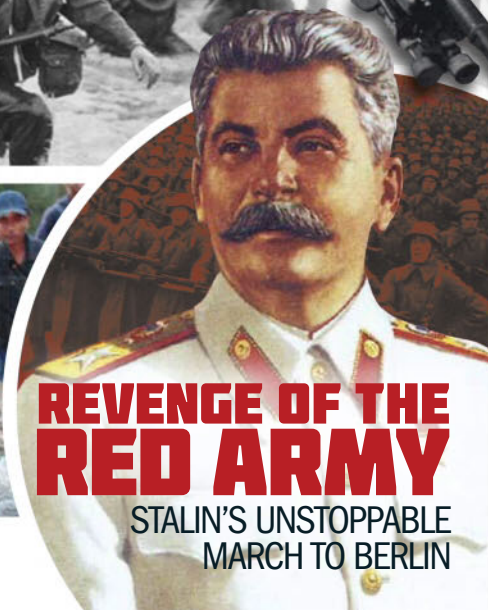
**SECRET TUNNEL
WARS OF WWI**

EXPLORE THE HIDDEN FIGHT
BENEATH THE TRENCHES



**CHAOS IN
EAST TIMOR**

THE SAVAGE STRUGGLE FROM
COLONY TO CATASTROPHE



**REVENGE OF THE
RED ARMY**

STALIN'S UNSTOPPABLE
MARCH TO BERLIN

Britain

ZULU WAR

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Welcome

“It’s going to be a piece of cake... we’re going to knock them for six”

– Tom Sherman, No 2 Commando,
prior to Operation Chariot

The covert operations of Britain’s commandos during World War II range from the impressively daring to the downright unbelievable. In early 1940, volunteers were gathered for ‘service of a hazardous nature’ – but few could have guessed they would be taking on near-impossible odds.

Men from all areas of the British armed forces, as well as many European refugees, took up the call to fight where no one thought possible.

In this issue’s cover feature, we explore some of the toughest commando operations, from the near-suicidal St Nazaire Raid, which commando Tom Sherman survived,

to the famous gruelling yomp across the Falklands. In all these thrilling accounts, the same skills, professionalism and sheer grit of the commandos prove indomitable.



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WILL LAWRENCE

After the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union lost momentum, the Red Army was soon poised to strike back with a vengeance. This issue, Will has looked at the Soviet advance from the ashes of Stalingrad to the gates of Berlin (page 60).



JACK GRIFFITHS

As well as compiling this issue’s cover feature on the toughest ever commando missions (page 26), Jack has been to visit one of the last surviving vessels from the Gallipoli campaign, HMS M33, now fully restored in all its glory (page 84).



MIGUEL MIRANDA

The Russo-Japanese War stands as one of the great underdog victories of the last century, with the fledgling Empire of Japan taking on Imperial Russia. Miguel looks at the conflict’s great turning point, the Battle of Port Arthur, on page 38.

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Men of No 3 Commando as they embarked on the Dieppe Raid





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The innovation behind these customised tanks helped the Allies advance through all terrains
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Veteran Ron Peet shares his experiences of serving in the naval flotilla for Gold Beach

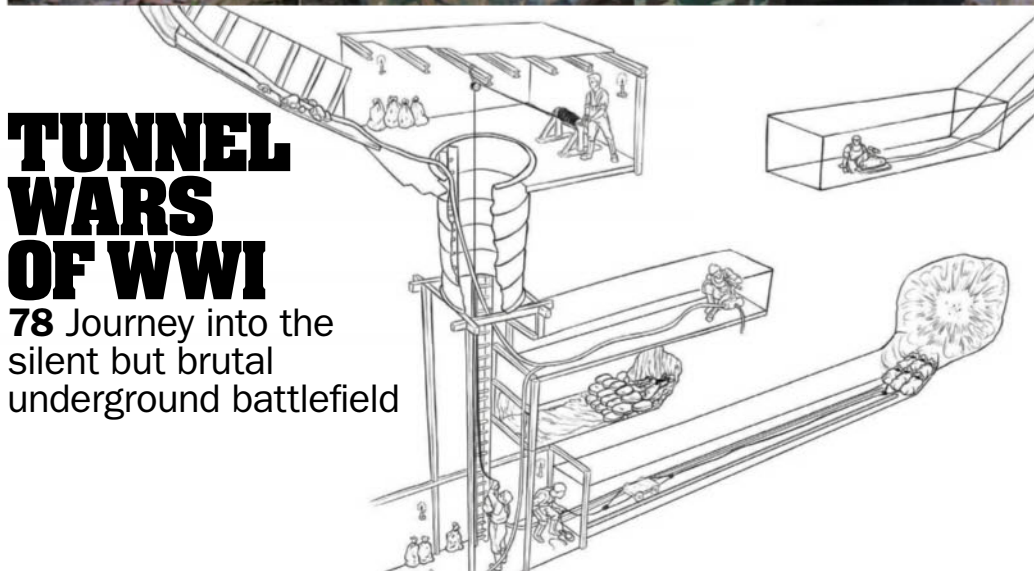
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50 Never miss an issue, get your *History of War* before it's in the shops and save a bundle while you're at it!



Chaos in East Timor

72 How did this territory turn from colony to catastrophe?



TUNNEL WARS OF WWI

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REVENGE OF THE RED ARMY

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HMS M33

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06 WAR IN FOCUS

Stunning imagery from throughout history, showing war in all its jaw-dropping detail

26 20 toughest commando missions

Take a look at the most daring missions taken on by Britain's elite forces

38 GREAT BATTLES Port Arthur

A nascent Japanese Navy takes on the might of Imperial Russia

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The true story of how one Marine held back a Japanese onslaught at Guadalcanal

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How Britain's powerful European rivals helped win American independence

60 Revenge of the Red Army

Uncover exactly how Stalin's forces turned the tables on the armies of the Third Reich

72 THE BRIEFING Chaos in East Timor

Discover why this tiny territory has been blighted by invasion and insurgency

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Under the trenches, a secret battle of nerves and high explosives was raging

84 OPERATOR'S HANDBOOK HMS M33

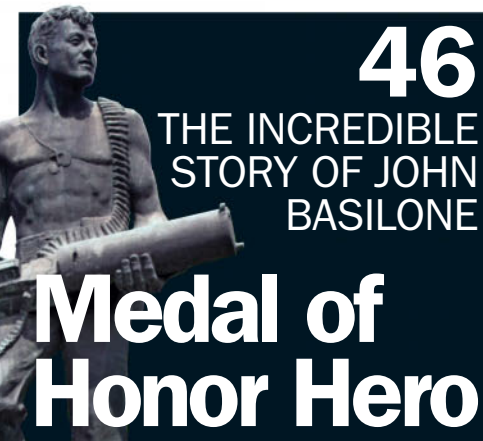
Jack Griffiths takes you aboard the last surviving vessel of the Gallipoli Campaign

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Learn the story behind this stunning parade armour owned by Grand Master Wignacourt



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THE INCREDIBLE STORY OF JOHN BASILONE

Medal of Honor Hero



WAR_{in} **FOCUS**

A DUSTY LANDING

Taken 18 February 2007

An RAF CH-47 Chinook kicks up a huge sandstorm while re-supplying 42 Commando Royal Marines at Patrol Base Delhi, Garmsir, Afghanistan. Helmet-mounted displays are now commonly being used to counter the effects of 'helicopter brownout', where a pilot's vision can be totally impaired due to dust or other interference, to enable a safe landing.



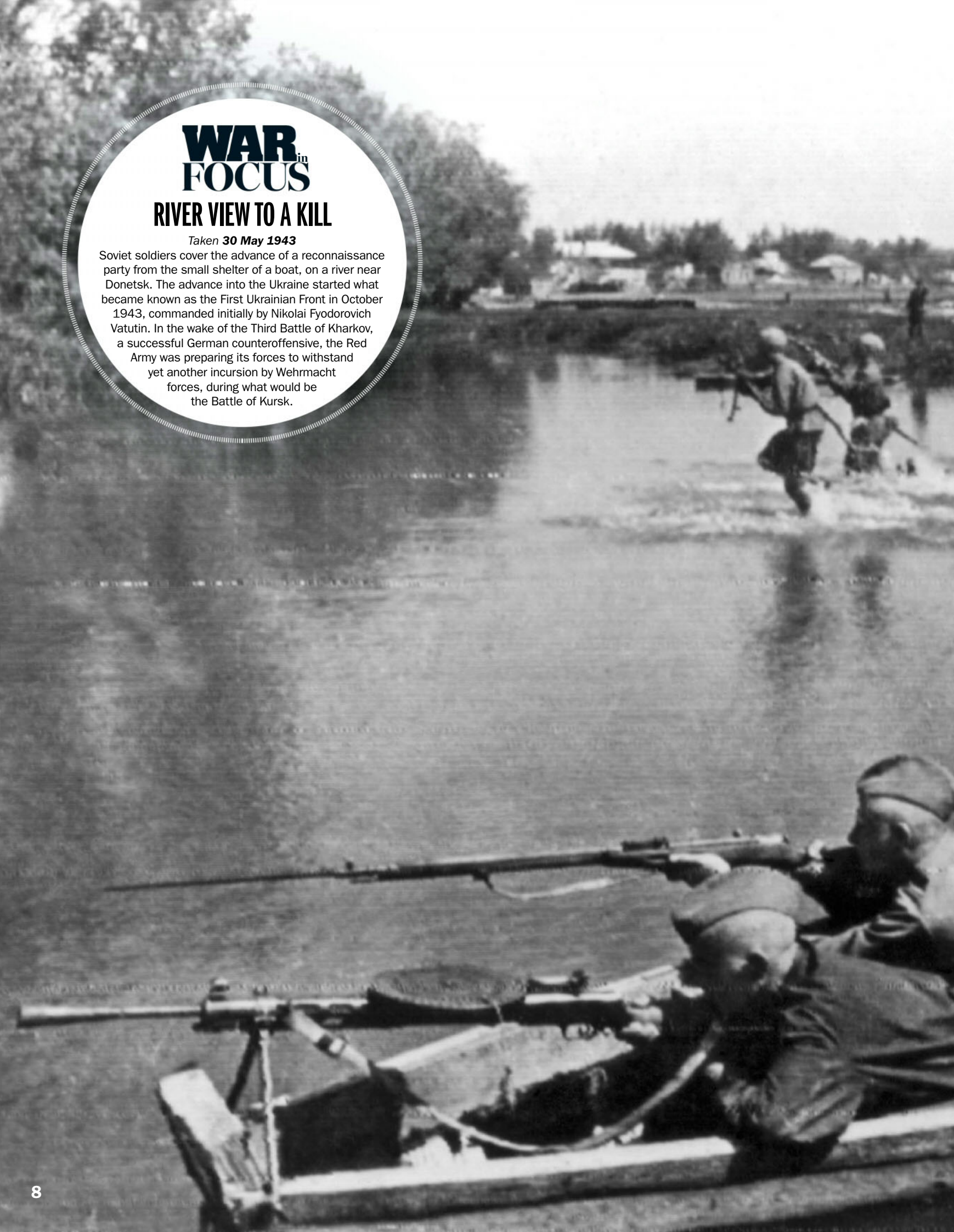
POA(Phot) Sean Clea / Crown Copyright / MoD

WARⁱⁿ FOCUS

RIVER VIEW TO A KILL

Taken 30 May 1943

Soviet soldiers cover the advance of a reconnaissance party from the small shelter of a boat, on a river near Donetsk. The advance into the Ukraine started what became known as the First Ukrainian Front in October 1943, commanded initially by Nikolai Fyodorovich Vatutin. In the wake of the Third Battle of Kharkov, a successful German counteroffensive, the Red Army was preparing its forces to withstand yet another incursion by Wehrmacht forces, during what would be the Battle of Kursk.









WAR_{in} **FOCUS**

DRESSED TO KILL

Taken 14 February 1991

Armed with his AK-47, a Syrian soldier stands ready during a firepower demonstration, during Operation Desert Shield, in Saudi Arabia. The soldier is wearing a Model ShMS nuclear-biological-chemical warfare mask and protective suit, in anticipation of possible enemy chemical attacks. The Iraqi Army under Saddam Hussein had been suspected of carrying out chemical attacks during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88).

OPERATION OVERLORD

In just 80 days, the Allies launched the most audacious invasion in history, liberating France and dealing a huge blow to the Third Reich



D-DAY DECEPTIONS THE SAS, DUMMIES AND TIN FOIL

0030 6 June 1944

THE CHANNEL, SAINT-LÔ AND THE
SEINE-MARITIME REGION

Before the offensive, SAS teams begin deception operations to confuse the Germans during the vital early hours of the invasion. Dummy paratroopers simulate landings far from the real drop zones, and out in the Channel, the RAF drop thousands of pieces of foil to fool Nazi radar and simulate a ghost invasion fleet.

Left: Hundreds of 'Oscar' dummies were dropped to fool the Nazis

AIRBORNE TROOPS LAND 24,000 ELITE PARATROOPERS DESCEND ON OCCUPIED NORMANDY

0015-0400 6 June 1944

PEGASUS BRIDGE AND SAINTE-MÈRE-ÉGLISE

Across Normandy, the elite Allied Airborne Divisions landed on the edges of the beaches, securing their flanks and taking key towns and bridgeheads. The British landed to the east capturing bridges, including the famous glider assault at Pegasus Bridge. US paratroopers land to the west, securing the exits from Omaha and Utah Beaches.



Douglas A-20
Havocs of US
9th Army Air
Force bombing
German coastal
defences around
Pointe-du-Hoc

BOMBING THE DEFENCES AIR AND NAVAL POWER CRACKS HITLER'S ATLANTIC WALL

0000-0625 6 June 1944

NORMANDY AREA, BEACHES AND INLAND

Five battleships, dozens of cruisers and more than 2,200 bombers pound the coastal fortifications and the vital transport hubs behind the invasion beaches. This is successful in breaking up the defences and preventing the Germans from rushing forward reinforcements. This saves thousands of Allied lives but the civilian cost is high, with 3,000 French citizens killed.

HITTING THE BEACHES THE ALLIED ADVANCE TO PARIS BEGINS ON THE SAND OF NORMANDY

0630 6 June 1944

OMAHA, UTAH, GOLD, SWORD AND JUNO BEACHES

132,000 men land on the first day and resistance is stiffest at Omaha. By the end of the day, the Allies are able to push inland. At Omaha, they are held up for six hours, while at Utah they manage to break out in just two. Losses are high, with 10,000 Allied and 8,000 German casualties.



Paratroopers photographed
just before takeoff on D-Day

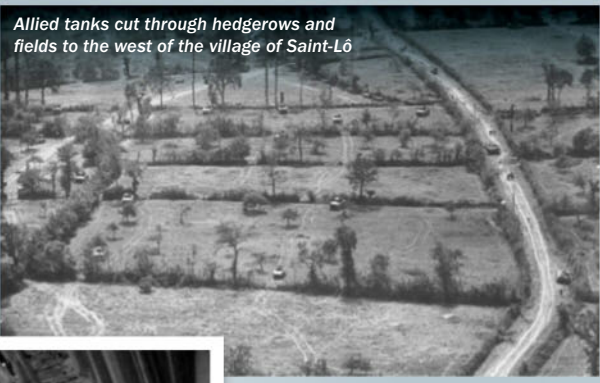


US troops crouch inside
an LCVP landing craft,
just before landing on
Omaha Beach

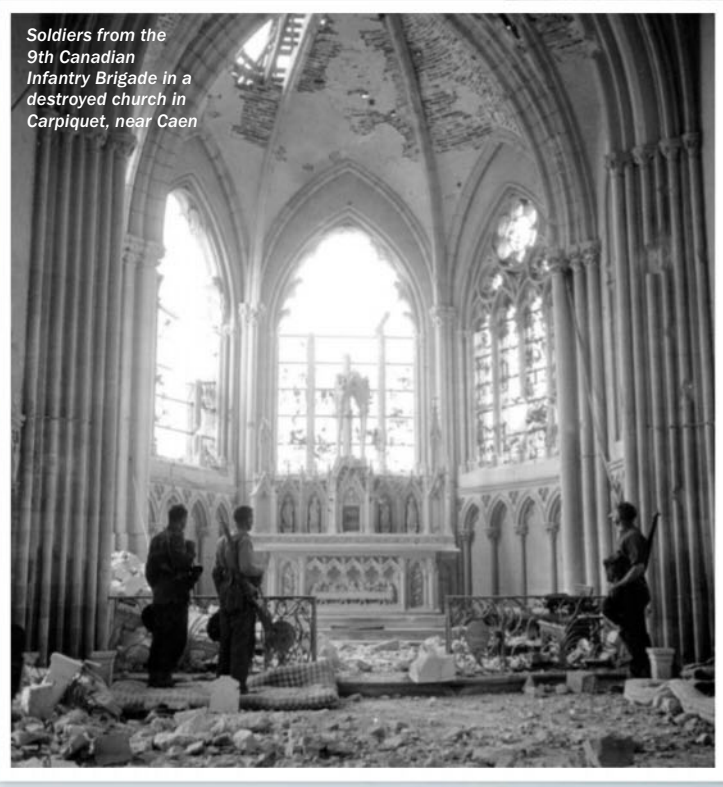
HELL IN THE BOCAGE
THE ALLIED PUSH INLAND GRINDS TO A HALT

7-20 June 1944
VILLERS-BOCAGE

Vicious fighting rages in the sunken lanes and hedgerows of the Bocage area of farmland, inland from the beaches. Crack German units, including elements of the feared SS, put up fierce resistance in the enclosed and claustrophobic confines of the Normandy countryside.



Allied tanks cut through hedgerows and fields to the west of the village of Saint-Lô



Soldiers from the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade in a destroyed church in Carpiquet, near Caen

CAEN AND BREAKOUT
AFTER THE BRUTAL BATTLE FOR CAEN, THE ALLIES SMASH THROUGH THE GERMAN LINE
June-August 1944
CAEN AND FALAISE
 Erwin Rommel's defence of Caen holds the Allies at bay for two months, and the city is only taken after prolonged aerial bombing and infantry attacks. Meanwhile, the Allies smash through German lines elsewhere and push further into France, liberating vast swathes of the country.

PARIS: FREE AT LAST
THE FIRST EUROPEAN CAPITAL TO BE FREED FROM NAZI TYRANNY
19-25 August 1944
PARIS
 The French capital is liberated following six days of tense street skirmishes. French Resistance members link up with Allied units to keep Paris intact despite Hitler's orders to burn the historic city to the ground. The first troops to enter the city are from the Free French 2nd Armoured Division.

“THE ALLIES SMASH THROUGH THE GERMAN LINE AND PUSH FURTHER INTO FRANCE, LIBERATING VAST SWATHES OF THE COUNTRY”



Crowds line the Champs-Élysées to view Free French tanks after the liberation of Paris

5 Facts about OPERATION OVERLORD

UNSTOPPABLE ALLIED AIR POWER

The Allies had more than 11,000 aircraft at their disposal during the invasion, painted with black-and-white invasion stripes to identify them. 15,000 combat sorties were flown with just 127 planes lost.

VITAL FRENCH RESISTANCE

15 days before the invasion, the French Resistance began operations to cripple German lines of communication. They cut telephone and railway lines in Normandy in more than 500 places, destroying 52 trains and sabotaging power plants.

EISENHOWER PREPARED FOR THE WORST

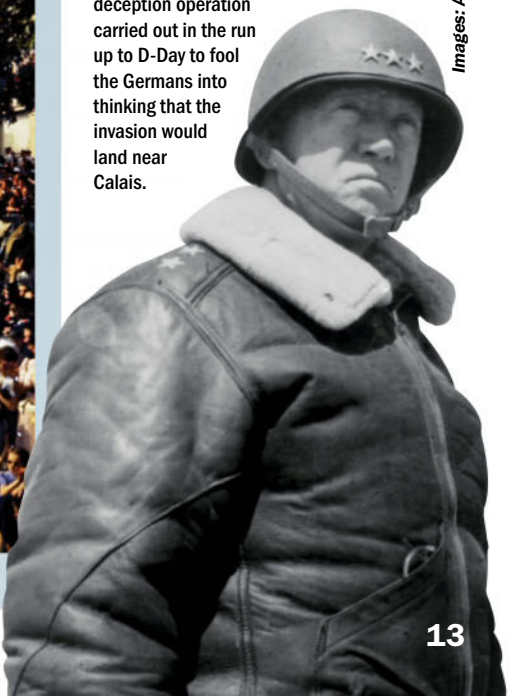
The scale of Hitler's Atlantic Wall was enough to cause the Supreme Allied Commander to consider failure. Drafting a short emergency speech to announce the possible failure, he wrote "the blame is mine alone."

EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON THE WEATHER

On 5 June, the invasion was briefly postponed due to storms. Group Captain James Stagg and his meteorological team predicted a brief window of clear weather on 6 June, and Eisenhower ordered the invasion to begin.

PATTON'S FICTIONAL ARMY

The fictitious First United States Army Group, commanded by General Patton, was part of a huge deception operation carried out in the run up to D-Day to fool the Germans into thinking that the invasion would land near Calais.



Images: Alamy, Getty

LIBERATING EUROPE

In the largest amphibious invasion ever undertaken, hundreds of thousands of Allied troops landed in June 1944 to change the course of history

Exercise Fabius: practice invasion of UK coast

3 May 1944
UK south coast

Fleets prepare at the embarkation ports

3 June 1944

Portsmouth, Newhaven, Poole and Dartmouth

2

1 BATTLE OF LYME BAY

LYME BAY, DEVON 28 APRIL 1944

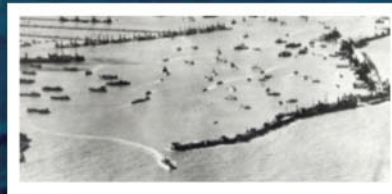
Nine German E-Boats attack an American infantry division training for their landing on Utah Beach. Caught by surprise, two landing ships packed with troops are sunk and 946 Americans killed.

Allied rocket ships fire 40,000 rockets at German positions

0615 6 June 1944
All beaches

Allied troops begin to hit the beaches

0630-0730 6 June 1944
All beaches



Mulberry harbours assembled

9 June 1944

Omaha Beach at Saint-Laurent-sur-Mer and Gold Beach at Arromanches

'Hobart's Funnies' modified tanks land and lead the advance

1000 6 June 1944

Sword, Gold and Juno Beaches

Vital port of Cherbourg captured

30 June 1944
Cherbourg

Sword Beach secured

0840 6 June 1944
Sword Beach at Saint-Aubin-Sur-Mer

2,200 Allied bombers pound the Atlantic Wall

0200-0550 6 June 1944
Normandy coast

Operation Cobra: the US breakout begins

25-31 July 1944
Saint-Lô

2 THE FLEET RENDEZVOUS

SOUTH-EAST OF THE ISLE OF WIGHT

2200 5 JUNE 1944

The massive invasion fleet of 6,939 ships includes 1,213 warships, 4,126 landing craft and 864 merchant ships. It gathers at Area Z 'Piccadilly Circus', the assembly point for the entire fleet, and begins the short journey across the channel to Normandy.

The last German defenders of Omaha Beach fall back

1530 6 June 1944
Omaha Beach

Free French Troops attack Ouistreham

1200 6 June 1944
Ouistreham

British and Canadian Commandos penetrate five miles inland

1300 6 June 1944
Sword and Juno Beaches

Collapse of the Falaise Pocket

21 August 1944
Falaise

Right: German forces surrender in Saint-Lambert-Sur-Dive in August 1944



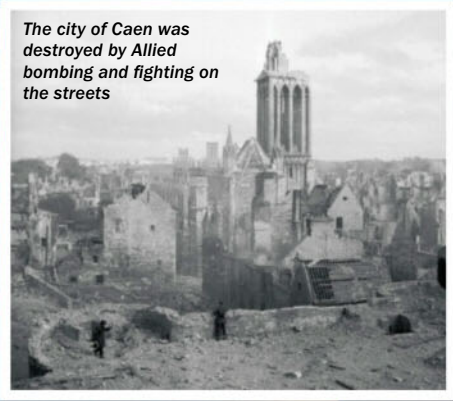
3 OPERATION DEADSTICK: PEGASUS BRIDGE GLIDER ASSAULT

BÉNOUVILLE 0016 6 JUNE 1944
Glider troops from the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry make a precision landing and capture the strategically vital Caen canal bridge.

4 ALLIES UNLEASH A MASSIVE NAVAL BOMBARDMENT

ALL BEACHES 0530 6 JUNE 1944
Seven huge battleships including USS Texas and HMS Ramillies, along with dozens of cruisers and more than 100 destroyers, open fire on shore targets.

The city of Caen was destroyed by Allied bombing and fighting on the streets



5 BATTLE FOR CAEN

CAEN 6 JUNE - 6 AUGUST 1944
Initially intended to be captured on D-Day, Caen becomes a focal point of German resistance. Rommel and his men mount a stubborn defence, holding out for weeks.

8 RANGERS ATTACK: POINTE-DU-HOC FALLS

POINTE-DU-HOC
0710-1500 6 JUNE 1944
Colonel James Rudder and 225 US Army Rangers scale 100-foot-high cliffs to capture the gun emplacements. After hours of fighting, the position is finally captured and the emplacements are found to be empty.

Right: Rangers at Point-du-Hoc. The American flag has been spread out to stop fire of friendly tanks coming from inland



“HITLER REFUSES TO BELIEVE THE INVASION TARGET IS NORMANDY, INSISTING THE ALLIES WILL ATTACK PAS-DE-CALAIS”

SAS deception teams parachute in
0000 6 June 1944
Seine-Maritime

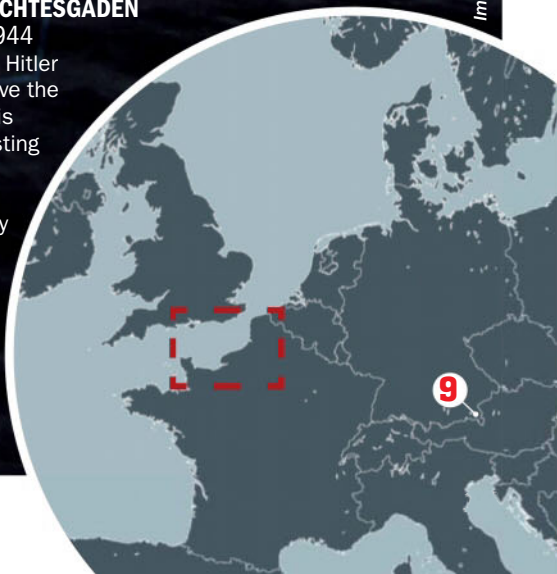
6 US 82ND AIRBORNE LIBERATES FIRST FRENCH TOWN

SAINTE-MÈRE-EGLISE 0400 6 JUNE 1944
US paratroopers storm and capture the tactically important town of Sainte-Mère-Eglise and its crossroads to the west of Utah Beach.


Liberation of Paris
19-25 August 1944
Paris

9 HITLER RELEASES THE PANZERS

BERGHOF, BERCHTESGADEN
1540 6 JUNE 1944
Waking at 9am, Hitler refuses to believe the invasion target is Normandy, insisting the Allies will attack Pas-de-Calais. He finally authorises the 12th SS Panzer Division to counterattack, nine hours after the first Allied landings.



'Into the jaws of death' - US Troops wading through water and Nazi gunfire

7 PINNED DOWN ON OMAHA BEACH

OMAHA BEACH 0640-1400 6 JUNE 1944
Landing craft are missing their landing areas. Some sink in rough seas while thousands are killed or wounded, as German resistance is much stronger than expected.

HEROES OF OVERLORD

The success of the Allied operation was often down to small but crucial acts of heroism

DAVID JAMIESON
YEARS ACTIVE: 1939-48
FORCE: BRITISH ARMY
RANK: CAPTAIN

Jamieson's army career began early when he worked as a volunteer in the Territorial Army in 1939 aged just 19. Despite his young age, he was quickly promoted to second lieutenant. However, when his battalion went to France in 1940, he was considered too young to accompany them. Nevertheless, the intrepid young soldier soon followed, and by the time he turned 23, he had been promoted to captain of the 7th Battalion of the Royal Norfolk Regiment. On 7-8 August, Jamieson was in command of a company just south of Grimbosq, Normandy, a position he filled by being the only officer remaining.

The area offered the Germans useful cover to prepare their counter-attacks, so the company soon found itself under fire from the 12 Panzer Division. The men faced overwhelming odds against a slew of attacks from Tiger and Panzer tanks. Jamieson was witnessed mounting a British tank to relay information to the commander inside, all under heavy enemy fire. Through 36 hours of bitter fighting, and sustaining multiple wounds, the young captain motivated his men with determination and a cool head. Seven German counter-attacks were repulsed and the enemy suffered great losses, largely thanks to Jamieson's noble and courageous leadership, for which he later received the Victoria Cross.



Jamieson refused to be evacuated even after being wounded in the arm and eye



Major General Matthew B Ridgway (left) decorates Brigadier James Hill with the US Silver Star

JAMES HILL
YEARS ACTIVE: 1931-48
FORCE: BRITISH ARMY
RANK: BRIGADIER

In the days before D-Day, Brigadier Hill was placed in charge of the 3rd Parachute Brigade in the 6th Airborne Division. Formed solely for the Normandy landings, the brigade was full of volunteers who had no parachute experience, and Hill set about training them. He drove the men hard, including the clerks and telephone operators, urging them to practise in the dark and sending them on two-hour marches carrying 60 pounds of equipment.

In order to keep morale up, he introduced parachuting dogs and encouraged the men to go to church – something they later thanked him for. Before they went into the fray, he said to his men: "Gentlemen, in spite of your excellent training and very clear orders, don't be daunted if chaos reigns – because it certainly will."

When the brigade landed on the night of D-Day, Hill found himself in four and a half feet of water due to an inaccurate landing. He gathered the men he could find (about 42) and they tied themselves together. As enemy aircraft passed over, Hill threw himself on the man in front as the brigade was pummelled.

Although he was hit, Hill survived, but there was only one other man who was able to stand. After giving morphine to the injured, Hill pushed on knowing that as commander he had a responsibility to pursue the objective. He marched for four and a half hours to get to the original planned landing location, and once he discovered his battalion had achieved their objectives, he finally allowed the doctors to treat his severe wounds.

Refusing to allow much time for his recovery, Hill threw himself back into command and led a counter attack during a German assault. The bodies of the men of his brigade who had died were thrown into a big shell hole by the Germans, however, the area was soon recaptured and Hill made sure to unearth them and give them the burials they deserved.



Mynarski's Lancaster bomber was shot down while flying over northern France



Mynarski was 27 when he died

ANDREW MYNARSKI
YEARS ACTIVE: 1940-44
FORCE: ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE
RANK: PILOT OFFICER

After the D-Day attacks, on 12 June 1944, Mynarski was flying aboard a Lancaster bomber preparing for a raid on northern France. Although the crew reached their target, they were spotted by the enemy and the plane was pummeled with cannon fire.

The men were ordered to bail out, but as Mynarski went to leave, he noticed that one of the officers, Pat Brophy, was stuck in his turret. Mynarski immediately went back through the flames to help Brophy, using

whatever he could get his hands on to free the trapped pilot. Noticing that Mynarski's parachute and flight suit were both on fire, Brophy signalled him to leave. Mynarski eventually complied; when he reached the door, he turned, saluted and said "good night, sir" before jumping.

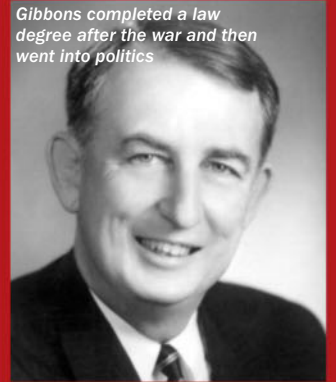
Due to his burning parachute lines, Mynarski dropped rapidly, and although he survived the impact, he was severely burned. He was taken to a German field hospital but died of his wounds. By a miracle, Brophy managed to survive the crash, and when he learned of Mynarski's death, told the story of his valiant efforts to save him. Mynarski was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for "valour of the highest order."

SAM GIBBONS
YEARS ACTIVE: 1941-45
FORCE: UNITED STATES ARMY
RANK: CAPTAIN

Although he is now remembered for his work in the political world, Gibbons postponed his law education to serve as a second lieutenant, and eventually captain, after the outbreak of World War II. He was a member of the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment when it landed near Carentan, France, on D-Day.

Aged just 24, Gibbons landed in a field and followed the sound of metal clickers to find his fellow paratroopers. On 13 June, the battalion went head to head in a battle against German tanks as the main German force moved towards Carentan. The relentless battle raged from 6am to 10pm, with only 400 of the 600 paratroopers who began that day still alive by the end. Against tremendous odds the men managed to restore their line of defence. From where Gibbons was positioned, he saw a dozen burning tanks. For his brave actions he was awarded the Bronze Star, and the conflict was later immortalised in the war drama *Band Of Brothers*. Many who knew him best said that he went into politics not to win wars, but to make them unnecessary.

Gibbons completed a law degree after the war and then went into politics



JOHN G BURKHALTER
YEARS ACTIVE: 1942-69
FORCE: UNITED STATES ARMY
RANK: LIEUTENANT COLONEL

Burkhalter was an unlikely soldier – in 1935, he was named senior pastor of a Baptist church in Florida, however, he decided to combine his faith with his military career. He was assigned to the 1st Infantry Division in 1943 and landed on Omaha Beach on D-Day. A letter that he wrote to his wife was printed in the *Miami Daily News*, bringing the public a true account of the horrors experienced

by those fighting on the beaches. Burkhalter's regiment formed part of the front line and he described the soldiers alongside him as having great courage.

As he witnessed men being killed by artillery shells he prayed intensely, saying that "danger was everywhere; death was not far off." Witnessing death all around him, the pastor crawled up the high hills along the beach with his fellow soldiers. When the battle was over, he administered blessings to the dead Allied and German troops.

Burkhalter went on to fight in the battle of the Bulge, where he sustained multiple head injuries. After the battle he was declared 'missing in action' until he turned up in a French hospital. For his immense bravery he was awarded the Purple Heart, Bronze Star and the Silver Star.



STANLEY HOLLIS
YEARS ACTIVE: 1939-44
FORCE: BRITISH ARMY
RANK: COMPANY SERGEANT MAJOR

Born in Middlesbrough, young Stanley Hollis worked in his father's fish and chip shop as a boy. When he was old enough, he joined the merchant navy, but he was struck with blackwater fever and forced to return home. With two young children to support, he became a lorry driver, but he joined the army with the Green Howards shortly before war broke out and quickly rose through the ranks to become a company sergeant major.

After landing at the beaches on D-Day, Hollis went with his commander to investigate two German pillboxes. Hollis fearlessly rushed into one pillbox and took all but five of the Germans prisoner. He quickly dealt with the second, taking 26 prisoners.

Just hours later he discovered that two of his men had been left behind after an unsuccessful raid. Simply saying "I took them in, I will try to get them out," he went back alone. Facing enemies armed with machine guns, he distracted their attention with a grenade. Although it failed to go off, it gave him enough time to run in, shoot them down, and rescue his men.

In recognition of his gallantry, Hollis was the only soldier to be awarded a Victoria Cross on D-Day.



Hollis's VC citation stated "he saved the lives of many of his men"

Images: Alamy

ANATOMY OF AN...

LCVP

(LANDING CRAFT VEHICLE PERSONNEL)

Created by a little-known manufacturer in New Orleans, the Higgins boat was the small landing craft that changed the war

PROVING A POINT

Higgins' designs were constantly rejected by the US Bureau of Ships. In 1942, to see which vessel was best, a challenge was concocted to carry a 30-ton tank through rough water, and the Higgins boat proved its worth.

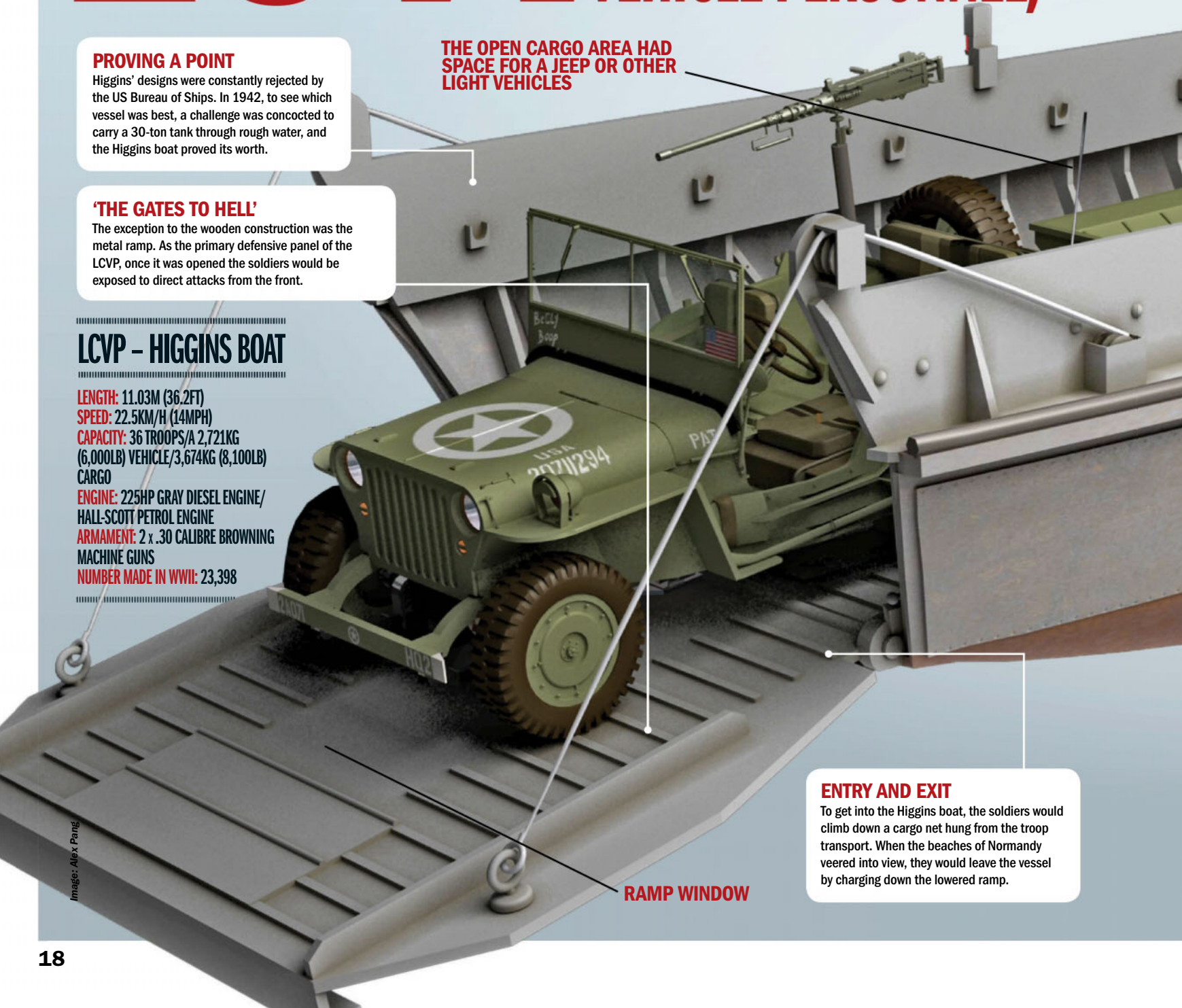
'THE GATES TO HELL'

The exception to the wooden construction was the metal ramp. As the primary defensive panel of the LCVP, once it was opened the soldiers would be exposed to direct attacks from the front.

THE OPEN CARGO AREA HAD SPACE FOR A JEEP OR OTHER LIGHT VEHICLES

LCVP - HIGGINS BOAT

- LENGTH:** 11.03M (36.2FT)
- SPEED:** 22.5KM/H (14MPH)
- CAPACITY:** 36 TROOPS/A 2,721KG (6,000LB) VEHICLE/3,674KG (8,100LB) CARGO
- ENGINE:** 225HP GRAY DIESEL ENGINE/HALL-SCOTT PETROL ENGINE
- ARMAMENT:** 2 x .30 CALIBRE BROWNING MACHINE GUNS
- NUMBER MADE IN WWII:** 23,398



ENTRY AND EXIT

To get into the Higgins boat, the soldiers would climb down a cargo net hung from the troop transport. When the beaches of Normandy veered into view, they would leave the vessel by charging down the lowered ramp.

RAMP WINDOW

Image: Alex Pang

SWAMP ORIGINS

The prototype of the LCVP, the Eureka, was tested extensively on the US Gold Coast. Operating in just 45 centimetres (18 inches) of water, the vessel could run through vegetation and wooded areas with ease – ideal preparation for the French beaches.

ANTI-MINE DEFENCES

The craft was so light that it could float over hidden mines in the water. It was also so manoeuvrable that it could return from banks and shorelines with minimal damage to the bow or the propeller.

A CANVAS COULD BE PUT UP AS COVER IN ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS**RAMP WINCH****ENGINE****STEERING POSITION WAS TO THE LEFT OF THE CRAFT****DOUBLE MACHINE GUNS**

Higgins boats were designed for logistical landings rather than fire fights. The LCVP still needed some protection though, so it was equipped with two .30 calibre Browning machine guns to provide support and cover fire.

FUEL TANK**PROTECTING THE PROPELLER SHAFT**

Under the Higgins boat, a wooden tunnel protected the propeller while aerated water allowed for faster speeds and improved manoeuvrability. A block of pine at the rear of the boat was made to be very sturdy to allow for frequent landings.

MAHOGANY WOOD CONSTRUCTION

To save costs, the majority of the boat was made from plywood or mahogany. Originally in the timber industry, Higgins was an expert at wooden boat construction and made the vessel light and cheap but also tough.

SHALLOW DRAFT

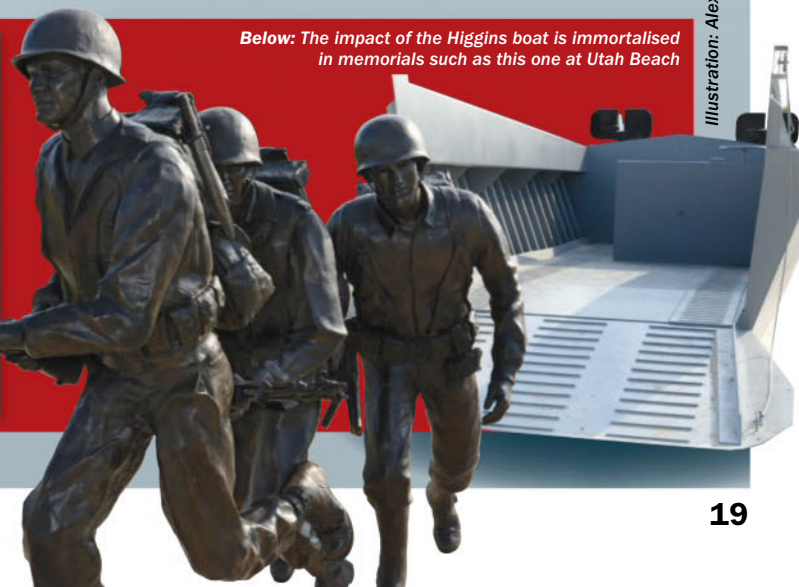
The LCVP could get much closer to the beaches of Normandy than almost anything else in the Allied navies. With no need for deep-water ports, the D-Day landings could be undertaken in the lightly defended parts of 'Fortress Europe'.

ARMOUR PLATING**THE MAN BEHIND THE BOAT**

Andrew Jackson Higgins was once a boat constructor in New Orleans, but all that changed with the advent of World War II. Funded by the US government, he developed the first designs for the boat that would later prove invaluable in the assault on Nazi-occupied Europe. Eisenhower is quoted as saying: "Andrew Higgins is the man who won the war for us. If Higgins had not designed and built those LCVPs, we never could have landed over an open beach. The whole strategy of the war would have been different". Hitler even labelled him the 'New Noah' as he rued the Allied defeat of his Atlantic Wall.



Below: The impact of the Higgins boat is immortalised in memorials such as this one at Utah Beach



ANGOVILLE-AU-PLAIN

It's 6 June 1944, and as battle rages all around, two brave US Army soldiers race against time to save lives

D-Day wasn't all beaches and German bunkers. One of the most memorable acts of courage was in a remote church in the small commune of Angoville-au-Plain. 19-year-old Kenneth Moore and 20-year-old Robert Wright only had minimal medical training, but found themselves thrust into action in Drop Zone D, the last of the 101st Airborne's drops on D-Day. Known by the French as 'la zone maudit' (the cursed zone), the two medics would be caught in the crossfire while tending to the stream of injured troops coming in through the church doors.

"AS NIGHTFALL APPROACHES, A US LIEUTENANT ARRIVES AND ADVISES A RETREAT. WITH NO WAY OF MOVING THE INJURED, MOORE AND WRIGHT REFUSE"

THE UNTOLD STORY OF TWO COURAGEOUS MEDICS

1 DROP ZONE D

D-Day is going well for the Allies. The Germans are retreating inland as the airborne divisions storm through Normandy. Although not an official objective, fierce fighting centres on a small church in Angoville-au-Plain as 2,000 German Fallschirmjäger stand firm.

2 FIRE FIGHT IN THE CHURCH YARD

Outside the church, a melee unfolds as neither side can hold on to the area. The church is turned into an aid station by Moore and Wright, who begin treating the wounds sustained by US soldiers.

3 TEMPORARY FIELD HOSPITAL

A Red Cross flag is pinned on the door as the two medics get to work. A rule is passed that no weapons are allowed in the church to ensure that as many lives are saved as possible.

4 THE MEDIC OATH

The oath of the medics is to treat the injured from either side, so even when injured Wehrmacht soldiers begin to enter the church, the two men tend to them as well.

5 MINIMAL SUPPLIES

As gunfire continues outside, Moore and Wright struggle bravely on. There are now 80 injured soldiers in the church. Without proper medical supplies, parachutes are used as bandages and to keep the men warm.

6 MORTAR STRIKE

The medics are forced out in to the open to ferry water to and from the church. Even inside they aren't safe, as mortars pound the roof. One mortar smashes through but doesn't explode; Moore throws it out of a window.

7 INJURY TO MOORE

Under what seems like constant bombardment, Moore takes a second to take off his helmet and wipe his brow. Unfortunately, a mortar explodes on the roof at the same time and the shrapnel cuts the medic's head open.

8 WEHRMACHT AT THE DOOR

After bandaging up Moore's head, the medics are interrupted by a German machine gunner bursting through the door. Examining the scene, the soldier lowers his MG 42, crosses himself and leaves.

9 ADVISED RETREAT

As nightfall approaches, a US lieutenant arrives and advises a retreat. With no way of moving the injured, Moore and Wright refuse. The drop zone is now in German hands as three of the men die from their injuries.

10 LIBERATION

The next morning, a US offensive clears the area. Not knowing it is a hospital, the troops begin firing at the church until the quick-thinking Wright ignites an orange smoke grenade, the signal of a friendly during D-Day. After 36 hours, the battle is over.

THE LEGACY OF ANGOVILLE-AU-PLAIN

IN THE WAKE OF THE 71ST ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY, THE MEMORY OF THE SCREAMING EAGLES STILL BURNS BRIGHT

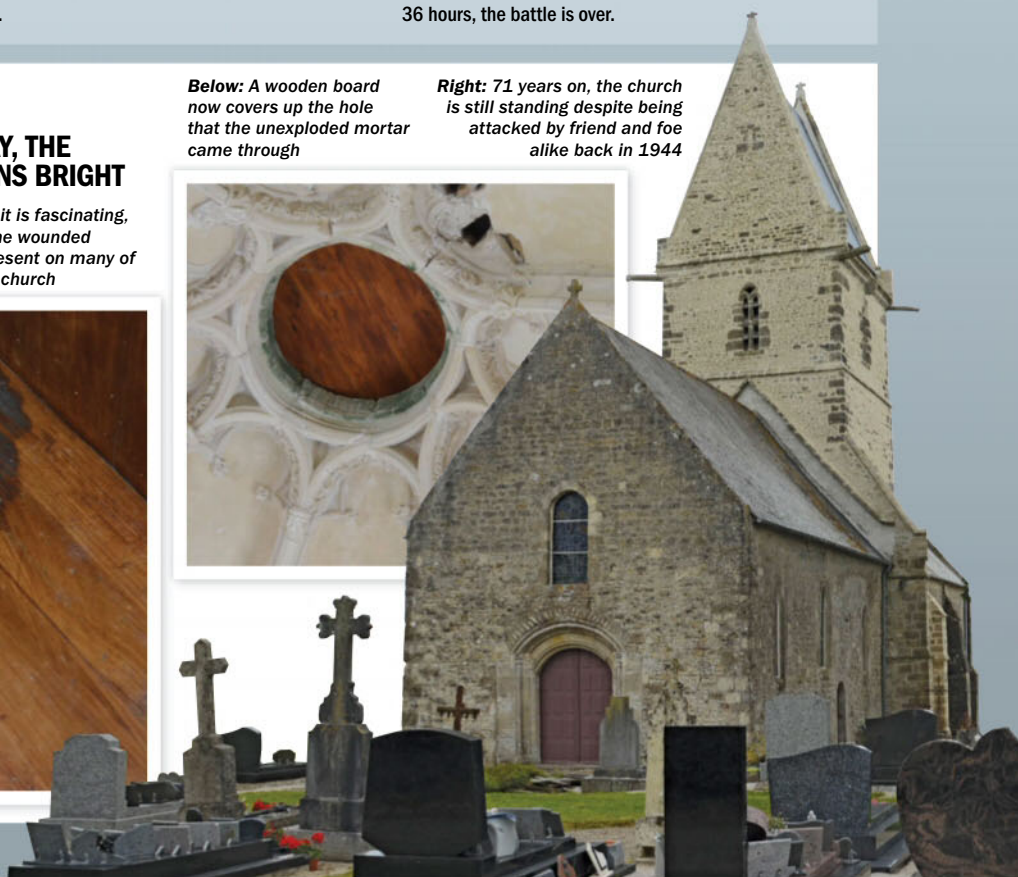
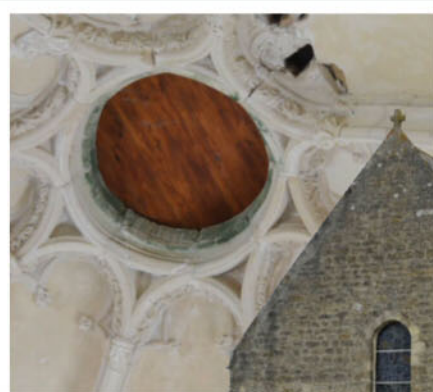
Left: The stained-glass windows inside the church illustrate the bravery of the two medics and the 101st Airborne Division

Below: As eerie as it is fascinating, bloodstains from the wounded soldiers are still present on many of the surfaces in the church



Below: A wooden board now covers up the hole that the unexploded mortar came through

Right: 71 years on, the church is still standing despite being attacked by friend and foe alike back in 1944





HOBART'S FUNNIES

They may have looked strange, but these specialised tanks played a vital role in overcoming all terrains in France and beyond

As Britain prepared for D-Day, it had to overcome a multitude of problems in order for the operation to succeed. The beaches of Normandy and beyond were covered with both natural and man-made

obstacles that would work in the enemy's favour. To combat this, a variety of unique tanks, known as Hobart's Funnies, were specially designed to ensure victory would fall in the Allies' favour.

DD TANK

Nicknamed 'Donald Duck tanks', this Sherman model was an amphibious swimming variant. The tank used a flotation screen and was powered to move through the water by a propeller. The DD tanks were rather fragile in rough seas, and in one instance during the Normandy landings, 27 of 29 tanks sank before reaching the shore.

FLOTATION SKIRT

An innovative design enabled the tank to 'swim' to shore in shallow water. The skirt had issues in deeper water though, which was discovered at Omaha when seawater entered into the vehicle.

ARMoured ADVANCE

The DD was used with distinction at Juno Beach in particular, protecting infantry from German machine-gun fire. The design would also be used in later campaigns as well as Overlord, showcasing its versatility.

ATTACK POWER

A variation on the standard Sherman, the DD still wielded immense attack power and was effective in taking out the Normandy portions of the Atlantic Wall.

ARMoured BULLDOZER

Designed to clear the invasion beaches of the various obstacles placed there by the Germans, this British innovation was a Caterpillar D7 Bulldozer equipped with armour. The first armoured bulldozer used in war, it was adept at clearing rubble but too slow to keep up with conventional tanks.

"THE DD TANKS WERE RATHER FRAGILE IN ROUGH SEAS, AND IN ONE INSTANCE DURING THE NORMANDY LANDINGS, 27 OF 29 TANKS SANK BEFORE REACHING THE SHORE"



CHURCHILL CROCODILE

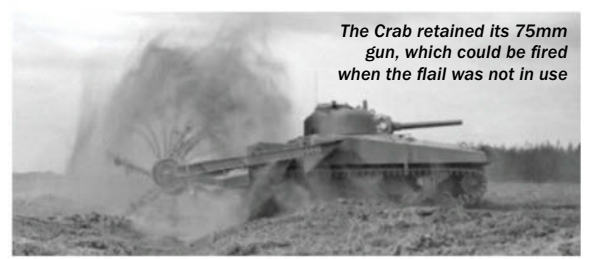
This modified Churchill tank came equipped with a devastating flamethrower. Although it reached Normandy after D-Day, its ability to project flame over long distances wreaked havoc in the German bunkers and trenches. It was a psychological weapon, with its mere appearance on the field enough to force soldiers to surrender immediately.



The flames from the Churchill Crocodile could reach up to 110 metres away

CRAB FLAIL TANK

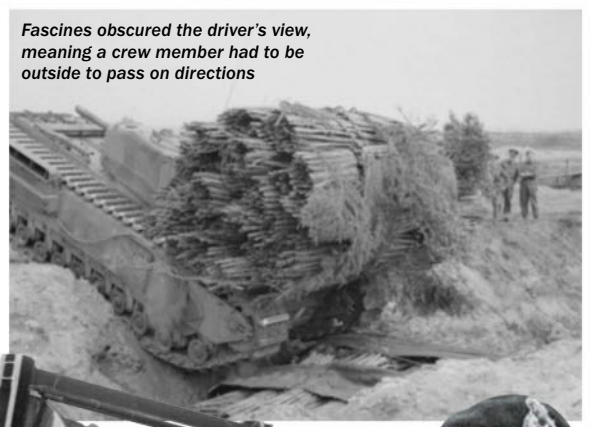
The Crab was another modified Sherman tank designed to clear minefields of obstacles. The tank was armed with a powerful mine flail powered by the main engine, capable of destroying barbed wire. It was also equipped with a pair of bins filled with chalk, which would mark the edges of the cleared route for troops to follow safely.



The Crab retained its 75mm gun, which could be fired when the flail was not in use

CHURCHILL AVRE FASCINE CARRIER

Fascine bundles, comprising groups of sticks wired together, had previously been used in World War I to fill trenches, enabling tanks to pass over them. This tactic was used again to great effect in World War II with the Churchill AVRE. The tank was equipped with a fascine carrier and could be deployed to fill not only enemy ditches but also craters created by Allied bombs.



Fascinies obscured the driver's view, meaning a crew member had to be outside to pass on directions

SHERMAN BARV

Short for 'beach armoured recovery vehicle', this was a customised Sherman M4A4 tank. The turret was replaced by a boat-like framework and the entire tank was waterproofed. About 60 BARVs were used in Normandy to remove and rescue stranded vehicles.



Unusually for a tank, the crew included a diver whose job was to attach towing chains to stuck vehicles

The carpet-layer could lay down a ten-foot-wide mat



CHURCHILL AVRE CARPET-LAYER WITH BOBBIN

The soft clay that covered the beaches of Normandy presented a problem for the tracked vehicles of the British Army, so a solution came in the form of the carpet-layer tank. The tank carried a canvas mat wound to a huge bobbin, which could be dropped and laid out, enabling vehicles to cross. The canvas was later replaced by a steel version.



General Percy Hobart was a member of the Royal Tank Corps, and the brother-in-law of Bernard Montgomery

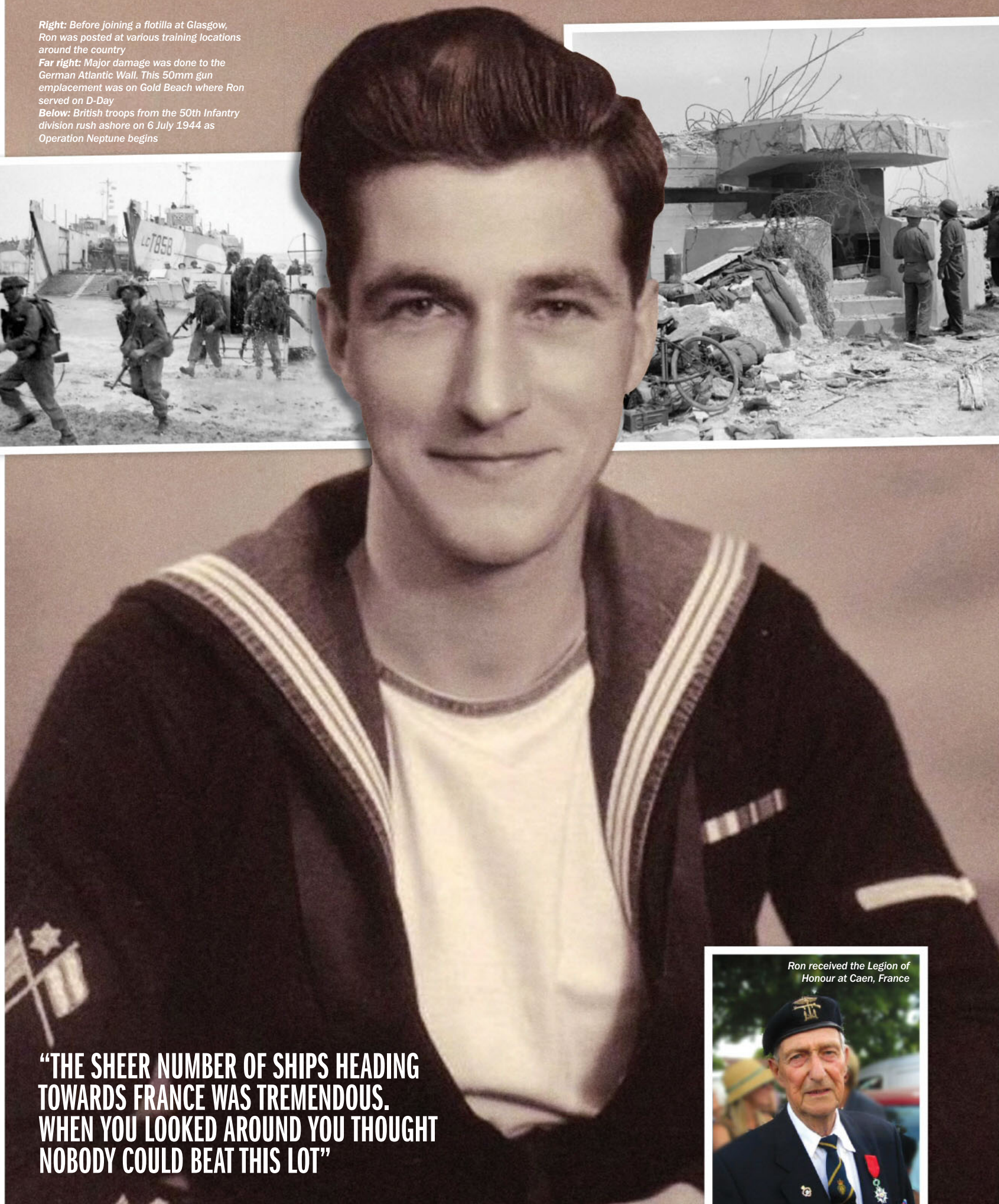
Image: Alamy, DK Images, Getty Images

STORMING GOLD BEACH

Right: Before joining a flotilla at Glasgow, Ron was posted at various training locations around the country

Far right: Major damage was done to the German Atlantic Wall. This 50mm gun emplacement was on Gold Beach where Ron served on D-Day

Below: British troops from the 50th Infantry division rush ashore on 6 July 1944 as Operation Neptune begins



"THE SHEER NUMBER OF SHIPS HEADING TOWARDS FRANCE WAS TREMENDOUS. WHEN YOU LOOKED AROUND YOU THOUGHT NOBODY COULD BEAT THIS LOT"

Ron received the Legion of Honour at Caen, France



STORMING GOLD BEACH

War veteran Ron Peet helped storm Gold Beach on D-Day. Here he shares his experiences

WHEN DID YOU JOIN THE ARMED FORCES?

I joined the Royal Navy in December 1942 and was sent to HMS Collingwood in Fareham for a signalers course. I spent three months there before they shut the signaling school and I was transferred to Skegness. It was here that I became a Signalman-Trained Operator until a draft came for combined operations on landing craft, and I was sent to an LCG [landing craft gun] ship for close-in work on beach landings. I joined a flotilla at Glasgow and we did gun firing courses and then moved to the south coast to do full-scale landings at Studland Bay, aiming at on-shore targets with live ammo.

HOW WERE YOU INVOLVED IN D-DAY?

We loaded the armoury to its full extent and took on army gunners and wireless operators. On the morning of the landings we were assigned to Gold Beach where the opposition wasn't at its strongest.

We all took off from the south coast and although everyone was fully aware that the landing was on, we only got the official sealed order when we were at sea. We'd practised for so long, D-Day felt overdue. I was on the flotilla leader so we gave signals to all the other craft using flags and Aldis lamps.

The skipper said "this is the big one" and everybody was ready for it, no doubt about that. The sheer number of ships heading towards France was tremendous. When you looked around you thought nobody could beat this lot. Morale on board was absolutely first class. Everyone had waited so long for this.

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE DAYS AFTER D-DAY AS THE ALLIES MOVED INTO FRANCE?

We then took on positions on the shore after advice from our wireless operators who were in touch with the army. After the beachhead was established, we took on targets ashore against the pockets of resistance. We stayed at the beachhead for three to four weeks.

On the second week we received a near miss and a watchman was killed by shrapnel along with three or four injured. We asked permission to leave the anchorage so we could bury the watchman at sea. Amid all the gunfire, everyone was in their best suits as the funeral took place. Later, the Mulberry Harbour arrived and the beachhead was secured. Once the army was established, they never looked back.

WHERE WERE YOU STATIONED AFTER THE NORMANDY LANDINGS?

The flotilla broke up after D-Day and craft were assigned to each beachhead as they worked independently. We realised that the Americans were in trouble on their beach and we were actually on our way to give them a hand just as they made the breakthrough.

Later, we returned to England and arrived at the River Ribble in Preston. We had a refit and the crew was sent on leave. I remember that my home was bombed and I was a bit taken aback. I thought I had a

tough time at sea but it was such a surprise to see bombing in Surrey at that time. When we came back, we noticed that the craft had been fitted with air conditioning, which meant one thing – we were going abroad once again.

We were issued with new kit and the heavy guns were taken off. We left Falmouth and joined up with a convoy of merchantmen, and made our way to Gibraltar and Malta. Next was the Bay of Biscay, which was very rough indeed. Our landing craft was flat-bottomed and not very fast so it took a long time for us to make any headway. We went on to support the 14th Army in the Far East.

HOW DID IT FEEL WHEN THE END OF THE WAR CAME AND YOU RETURNED BACK HOME TO BRITAIN?

The ending of the war in the Far East came as a complete surprise to everyone. The bombs were dropped and the war had ended, just like that. I can remember everyone being nonplussed. It was totally unexpected.

COULD YOU TELL US ABOUT RECEIVING THE LEGION OF HONOUR FROM THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT?

I've been a member of the Royal British Legion for 16-18 years and I'm vice president of the Wincanton branch. In 2014, I was 90 and I went to France in time for the D-Day festivities. I rang the MoD about it and when I got my tickets through I was told that I would be awarded the Legion of Honour, much to my surprise! We went to Caen in France, and on 5 June I received my medal along with 60 others, of which 22 were British.

THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

The Royal British Legion is the UK's largest Armed Forces charity. It upholds the memory of the fallen, and supports the future of the living. Ron Peet is vice president of the Wincanton branch of the Legion. For further information about the Legion, its services and how to get involved with the charity, visit: www.britishlegion.org.uk.

THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

Minesweepers (including HMT Coriolanus) and other invasion craft including LCPs (Landing Craft Personnel) – LCP 358 and LCP 298 are visible – making for the beaches off Gold assault area, 6 June 1944





20 TOUGHEST

COMMANDO MISSIONS

DISCOVER THE MOST DARING & DESTRUCTIVE OPERATIONS OF THE DEADLIEST ELITE FORCE

WORDS JACK GRIFFITHS



It's 1940 and Britain has just weathered the first waves of the blitzkrieg storm. After the evacuation of Dunkirk, Churchill and his war cabinet have some respite to decide what is the best way to retaliate against the Third Reich. They make the decision to form an elite force that will be better than the best the Wehrmacht has to offer. The result is the creation of the British Commando regiment.

The commandos would become an instrumental part of the Allied fighting force during the war. Men were recruited from all over Britain to take part in what was simply called 'service of a hazardous nature'. From D-Day to the Far East, the specialised units would become the scourge of the Axis forces. Despite initially having little training, these shock troops proved so effective that Hitler authorised the 'Kommandobefehl' (Commando Order), stating that German soldiers should eliminate any Allied special forces soldier on sight. This went directly against the original Geneva Convention and demonstrated just how these soldiers got under the skin of the Nazi hierarchy. Their job done, the British Commandos were disbanded after the war, but their role and skill set has lived on in the Royal Marines.



1 THE ST NAZAIRE RAID

28 MARCH 1942

1ST, 2ND, 3RD, 4TH, 5TH, 9TH AND 12TH COMMANDOS

The daring operation that punched a hole in the Third Reich's critically important dry dock

One of the finest acts of courage in the whole of World War II, the raid on St Nazaire was a true gamble. The best way to hurt the Kriegsmarine was to strike its dockyards, so the port became a key target for the British in what would be known as Operation Chariot.

The tricky part of the attack was reaching the harbour, as it was not exposed to open sea, so the commandos would have to navigate an eight-kilometre (five-mile) estuary as well as avoid a multitude of German anti-aircraft flak guns. Even worse, they could not use the tactic of blanket bombing due to the high number of civilians in the surrounding area, and naval support was tricky due to the narrow estuary.

Under the command of Lord Louis Mountbatten, the decision was taken to

pack the destroyer HMS Campbeltown full of explosives and ram its full bulk into the dock while commandos from the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 9th and 12th units rode alongside the vessel in small motor launches.

Despite having the cover of night and taking a variety of precautionary measures, the Germans were alerted, meaning only a few of the motor launches made it to the docks. Once ashore, the commandos and demolition squads rushed into the submarine pens to arm explosives. The main objectives were:

- Completely destroy the two caissons of the Normandie Dockyard.
- Demolish as many of the dockyard facilities as possible.
- Break down the lock gates.

“THE TRICKY PART OF THE ATTACK WAS REACHING THE HARBOUR, AS IT WAS NOT EXPOSED TO OPEN SEA”

1 AT THE HARBOUR WALLS

Approaching the port from the Loire Estuary, 16 motor launches carry 621 commandos past the sea walls and into St Nazaire. Among the commandos are demolition squads with the sole intent of destroying as much of the dock as possible before extraction.

2 HMS CAMPBELTOWN

Filled with four tons of explosives, the destroyer is disguised as a German Möve torpedo boat and successfully ghosts past the coastal defences. In the early hours of the morning, the alarm is finally raised and Commander Mecke orders all of the port's gun emplacements to open fire.

3 RACE TO THE DOCK

The British vessels respond as a crossfire ensues. Many of the motor launches are lost to the defences, but Campbeltown is the worst hit as shells pound its sides and machine-gun fire rakes its deck. It smashes into the dock at 1.34am.

4 BOMBING RUN

Led by Commander Ryder, the commandos and demolition squads land on the quayside. The German resistance is fierce as the British troops get to work. The primary target, the pump house, is found by a squad of four sergeants, who promptly demolish it.

5 BREAKOUT

With the Germans regrouping, the commandos are in trouble. As many objectives as possible have been completed, so the commandos decide to fight their way out of the town. The British record many losses, but by first light, most have escaped with their lives and the raid is over.

6 DETONATION

The next day, Campbeltown explodes killing more than 400 German soldiers and reducing the dock gates to rubble. 59 commandos have been killed or are missing with another 109 captured. Five Victoria Crosses will be awarded.



Above: HMS Campbeltown after it ploughed into the dock. The fuses didn't detonate until the next day, but the Germans couldn't haul the behemoth off the gate

THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

The longest continuous campaign of the war, the battle for the Atlantic raged from 1939 until 1945. Hitler knew that Britain depended on its overseas allies for supplies and arms, so cutting this off would significantly restrict Churchill's options. German U-boat wolf packs were deadly in the conflict, launching at a rapid rate off the newly acquired coastal ports in Vichy France. At first, the Kriegsmarine dominated, but the tide began to turn in 1941 as the Allies managed to get on top of the U-boat threat. As the Germans retreated to Fortress Europe, it was time for the Allies to go for the jugular and hit the Axis ships where they were most vulnerable, their docks.

One of the many Allied convoys that contributed to the demise of the U-boats in the Battle of the Atlantic



EXPERT OPINION

DR PETER JOHNSTON, NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM

How much did the St Nazaire raid affect German operations in occupied France and the Atlantic? After Campbeltown exploded, the St Nazaire dry dock was rendered inoperable for the rest of the war. This severely limited the ability of the German surface fleet to operate in the Atlantic and threaten the convoys on which Britain depended. Because of the raid, the German Navy never sent the Tirpitz into the Atlantic for fear that, if it needed repairs, it would have to return to German waters via the English Channel where the Royal Navy Home Fleet could threaten it. Instead, the Tirpitz remained in the Norwegian waters until the RAF destroyed it on 12 November 1944.

The raid also accelerated German plans for the Atlantic Wall. Ports, in particular, were increasingly fortified to prevent a repeat, and by June 1942 the Germans began using concrete to fortify gun emplacements and bunkers. While this diverted resources away from other German theatres of war, it would also make any future landing in Europe more difficult for the Allies.



2 THE COCKLESHELL HEROES

7-12 DECEMBER 1942

HMS TUNA

Known officially as Operation Frankton, this courageous escapade involved a band of commandos canoeing 70 miles to lay charges on German ships

One of the most unusual missions of the war, Frankton is nonetheless fondly remembered for helping maintain the Allied blockade between Japan and Germany. The idea of using canoes for infiltration behind enemy lines came from the British witnessing the success of the Italian canoes in December 1941, which did major damage to the battleships Elizabeth and Valiant. By 1942, the Allied blockade on Germany was becoming less and less effective, especially at the port of Bordeaux. After deliberating the more conventional forms of assault, it was decided that canoes would be the method of attack.

Split into two divisions, the objective was to destroy German ships in the harbour. After a series of faults, only the canoes Catfish and Crayfish managed to make it to Bordeaux. While taking cover in some vegetation, the four men were discovered but managed to convince the civilians that remaining silent would be the best course of action. The two canoes pressed on for

days and eventually made it to their target on the night of 10 December. Making their way into the docks, the fuses on the limpets were set.

On the next night, more mines were attached to cargo ships and patrol boats as five ships and the harbour itself were badly damaged. At one point, Catfish was spotted by a sentry, but its camouflage saved the day as the soldier turned away again. Their work done, the canoes were scuttled and the crew made a hasty escape to the safety of the Spanish border. The success of Operation Frankton is credited with helping shorten the war.



EXPERT OPINION



Winston Churchill believed the Cockleshell Heroes shortened the war by six months. How and why was it so effective?

Churchill's claim may have been a little exaggerated, based on the need for propaganda in what was otherwise a dark time for the British war effort. The long-term effects of the raid were not as significant as those of St Nazaire – but they did of course have an affect on the German war machine.

However, nothing should detract from the bravery of the men who carried it out. A small team that was well led, well trained and dedicated to success, inflicted damage far outweighing their small capacity. The Germans became increasingly defensive and committed more resources to guarding ships in harbour – men and material that could have been deployed elsewhere.

Left: "Of the many brave and dashing raids carried out by the men of Combined Operations Command, none was more courageous or imaginative than Operation Frankton," said Lord Mountbatten

THE HEROES

<p>CATFISH</p> <p>LIEUTENANT COLONEL HERBERT HASLER</p> <p>ROYAL MARINE BILL SPARKS</p>	<p>MISSION SUCCESS</p>
<p>CRAYFISH</p> <p>CORPORAL ALBERT LAVER</p> <p>ROYAL MARINE WILLIAM MILLS</p>	<p>MISSION SUCCESS</p>
<p>CONGER</p> <p>CORPORAL GEORGE SHEARD</p> <p>ROYAL MARINE DAVID MOFFATT</p>	<p>CAPSIZED</p>
<p>CUTTLEFISH</p> <p>LIEUTENANT JOHN MACKINNON</p> <p>ROYAL MARINE JAMES CONWAY</p>	<p>MISSING</p>
<p>COALFISH</p> <p>SERGEANT SAMUEL WALLACE</p> <p>ROYAL MARINE ROBERT EWART</p>	<p>CAPSIZED</p>
<p>CACHALOT</p> <p>ROYAL MARINE W A ELLERY</p> <p>ROYAL MARINE E FISHER</p>	<p>LAUNCH FAILURE</p>
<p>SUPPORT ROYAL MARINE NORMAN COLLEY</p>	

THE ESCAPE

1 TARGET: BORDEAUX

The operation gets off to a poor start as one of the canoes is holed as it leaves the submarine. The remaining five vessels make it to the River Gironde, but two more are put out of the operation by a powerful rip tide.

2 TWO CREWS REMAIN

After Cuttlefish is spotted and apprehended by Germans, just two canoes are left to continue the operation. Arriving in the harbour, they bypass a sentry and attach limpet mines to the ships. Each one has a nine-hour fuse, so the Catfish and Crayfish are long gone by the time of the explosion.

3 DAMAGE DONE

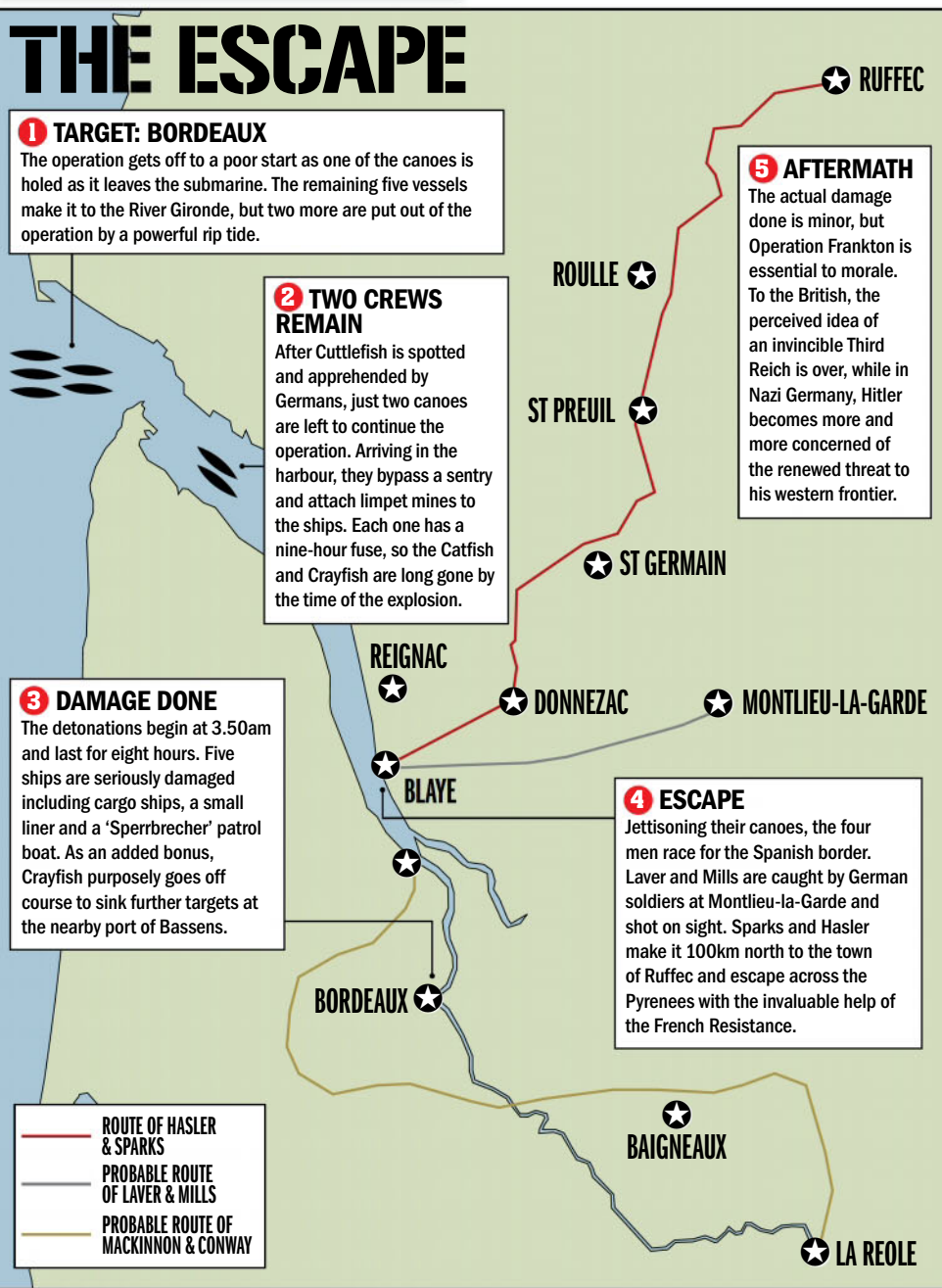
The detonations begin at 3.50am and last for eight hours. Five ships are seriously damaged including cargo ships, a small liner and a 'Sperrbrecher' patrol boat. As an added bonus, Crayfish purposely goes off course to sink further targets at the nearby port of Bassens.

5 AFTERMATH

The actual damage done is minor, but Operation Frankton is essential to morale. To the British, the perceived idea of an invincible Third Reich is over, while in Nazi Germany, Hitler becomes more and more concerned of the renewed threat to his western frontier.

4 ESCAPE

Jettisoning their canoes, the four men race for the Spanish border. Laver and Mills are caught by German soldiers at Montlieu-la-Garde and shot on sight. Sparks and Hasler make it 100km north to the town of Ruffec and escape across the Pyrenees with the invaluable help of the French Resistance.



3 OPERATION JACANA

APRIL-JULY 2002

45 COMMANDO BATTALION

The US forces in Afghanistan send for the help of the commandos

By the summer of 2002, there were still pockets of resistance in the hills of Afghanistan. Combat first came on 17 May after the commandos killed 11 Taliban members. Uncharacteristically, the remainder of the operation was marred by altitude sickness and low morale, and the overall performance was described as "ineffective." Much of the blame went to commander Roger Lane who was later dismissed. The commandos claimed they had not been given clear objectives but nevertheless, Jacana was a rare misstep.

Below: A planned explosion during Jacana. The operation was the first time the UK had agreed to send its troops into Afghanistan after many previous requests



4 OPERATION IRONCLAD

5-7 MAY 1942

NO 5 COMMANDO

The mission to liberate Madagascar from Vichy France and Imperial Japan

Arriving at dawn on 5 May after a long journey from Britain, the surrounding area of Diego Suarez was mine swept before the assault on the port. In the intense African heat, the commandos did battle with colonial troops before boarding HMS Anthony under the cover of darkness to attack the city's wharfs. The operation's demoralising affect on the Vichy French forces contributed greatly to the armistice signed in November that year and kept the island out of Japanese hands.

Operation Ironclad proved that commandos could work in tropical climates just as effectively as in Europe



5 OPERATION FRESHMAN

19-20 NOVEMBER 1942

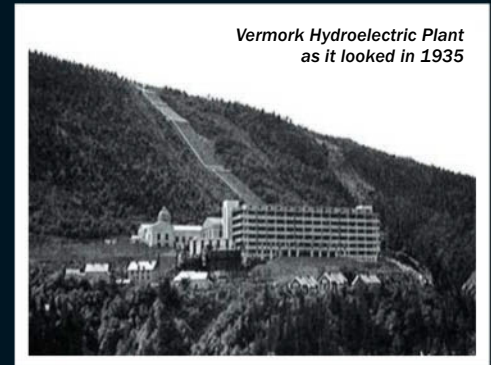
ROYAL ENGINEER COMMANDOS

The commandos are sent to Norway; their aim is to stop the creation of a Nazi atomic bomb

The Allied Manhattan Project had only started in August 1942, so it was imperative that this new threat from the Nazis was stopped imminently. Located in a Norwegian hydroelectric plant in a deep valley, the decision was taken to drop off the squads via glider on a landing zone five miles from the target. The squad of 30 would split into two and be deployed on a homing beacon-marked landing site in two Airspeed Horsa gliders. Halifax bomber planes were chosen for the mission, as they were the only aircraft in the RAF capable of towing a glider for the 400 miles required to reach Norway from Britain.

The operation was nearly postponed due to adverse weather conditions, but went ahead on the evening of 19 November. Disaster struck almost right away as the radio

“DISASTER STRUCK ALMOST RIGHT AWAY AS THE RADIO RECEIVER STRUGGLED TO PICK UP THE SIGNAL FROM THE TRANSPONDER ON THE GROUND”



Vermark Hydroelectric Plant as it looked in 1935

receiver struggled to pick up the signal from the transponder on the ground. Things got worse at about midnight as the towrope on one of the aircraft froze and snapped; many of the crew were killed and the rest were captured. The second aircraft managed to retreat back to the coast, but for reasons unknown, released the glider, which crashed into the mountainside; the crew were all killed or went missing.

There were positives to come out of the failure. The Halifax demonstrated that long-haul military flights were achievable, as was the versatility of airborne missions. The Norwegian Resistance would return a year later and successfully complete the objectives. A German atomic bomb was never made.

WAR CRIMES AGAINST COMMANDOS

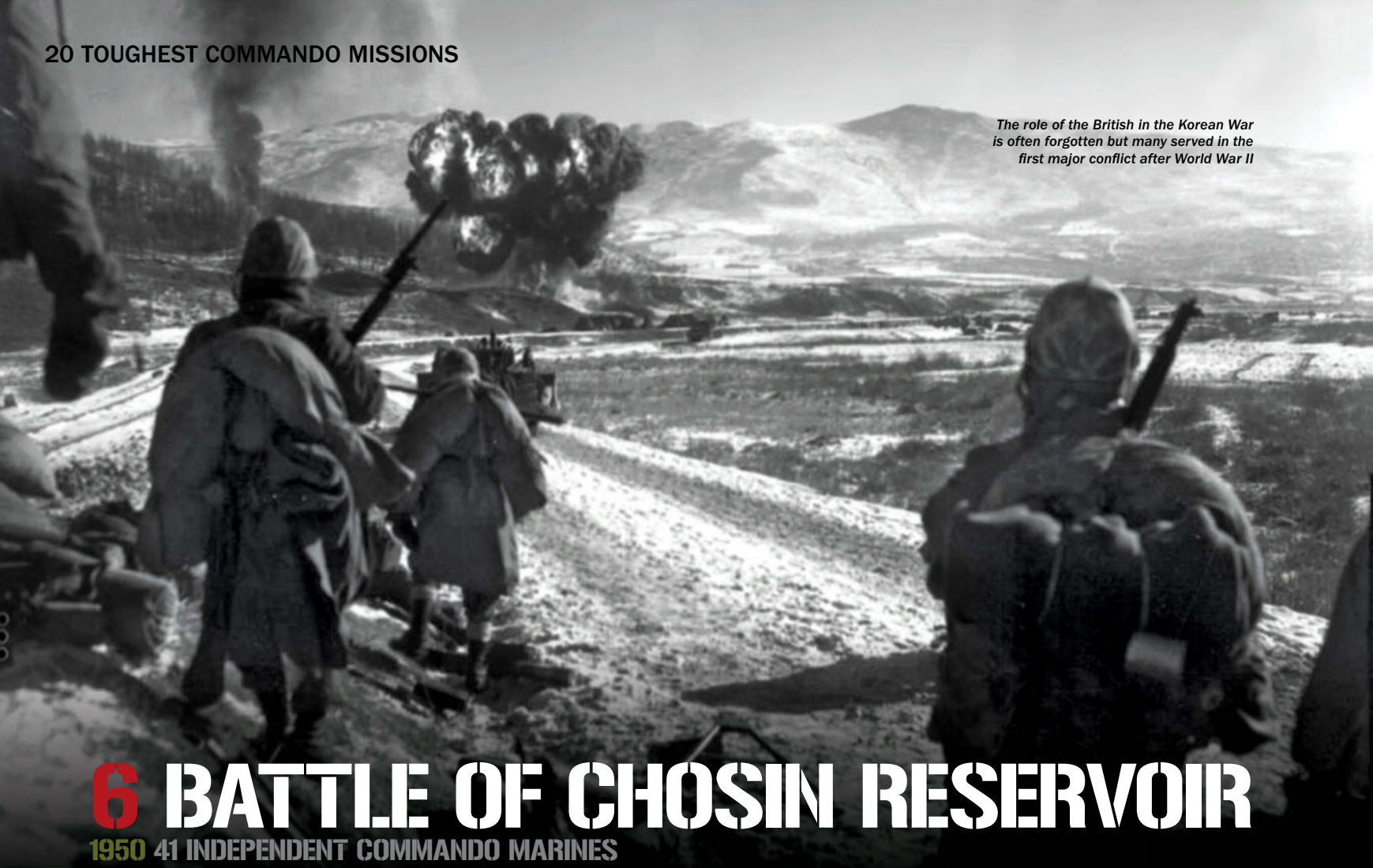
The survivors of the two crash landings were not treated well by the Gestapo. After being captured in a German-occupied town in Norway, the men of the first crash were taken to the German camp at Slettebø while the second were executed at a concentration camp at Grini. The liberation of Norway in 1945

revealed the true extent of the horror, and the Nazi personnel responsible for the killings were captured. Put on trial between 10-14 December 1945, the men, including the commander of German forces in Norway, were found guilty of war crimes. Freshman revealed the brutality of Hitler's Commando Order.

The concentration camp at Grini where the commandos were killed in cold blood by the Gestapo



The role of the British in the Korean War is often forgotten but many served in the first major conflict after World War II



6 BATTLE OF CHOSIN RESERVOIR

1950 41 INDEPENDENT COMMANDO MARINES

Now under the command of the US Army, one of the remaining commando units took its expertise and skill set to the Far East

Barely five years after the drop of Little Boy on Hiroshima, British Commandos were on the warpath once again. The majority of the commando units had been disbanded after World War II and Britain wasn't officially at war, but this didn't stop 100,000 British troops getting caught up in the Korean War. One of the remaining battalions was the 41 Independent Commando, which fought with distinction at the battle of Chosin Reservoir.

As the People's Liberation Army poured in from the Chinese border, the United Nations forces were forced to fall back to a reservoir. Led by Colonel Douglas B Drysdale, the 250 commandos fought bravely in a region dubbed 'Hell Fire Valley', but only advanced two miles in three hours as they became pinned down under

constant bombardment. Eventually, Drysdale called for reinforcement from US tanks. Jumping on the convoy, the column pressed on but was hit hard as radio communications were lost by one huge blast that split the 41 up from the rest of their allies. As the Chinese came in for the kill, the commandos barely escaped with their lives and just about made it to some respite at Hagaru-ri.

The next day the decision was taken to break out of Hagaru-ri on what would be a gruelling 38-hour march and part of a mass fighting retreat of UN troops. A Pyrrhic victory for the Chinese, the battle is considered as one of the US Marine Corps' finest moments and also an enduring memory for the Green Berets, who lost 50 per cent of their men in the battle.

BRITAIN IN THE KOREAN WAR

Sometimes considered a forgotten war in Britain, 100,000 British troops fought on the Korean Peninsula between 1950 and 1953. Under the umbrella of the UN Command, British soldiers were exposed to harsh conditions and a tough, uncompromising foe. One of the major battles involving British soldiers was the Battle of the Imjin River, where 600 soldiers from the British Army took on 30,000 Chinese troops. More than 1,000 British servicemen were captured during the war and exposed to horrendous treatment. 82 never returned home. The war resulted in huge losses on both sides and the division of Korea.

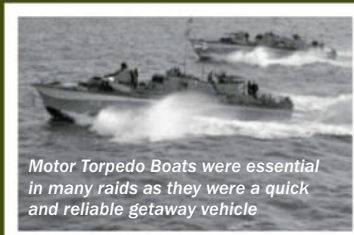
Below: Known as the 'Chosin Few', the efforts of the commandos in Korea aren't well documented



7 OPERATION CARTOON

23-24 JANUARY 1943 NO 12 COMMANDO

Alongside Norwegian allies, another Nazi power source is destroyed



Motor Torpedo Boats were essential in many raids as they were a quick and reliable getaway vehicle

The Norwegian island of Stord was functioning as a reliable store of iron pyrite for the Third Reich military. British commandos charged with destroying the German facilities were accompanied by ten Norwegian commandos and a convoy of seven MTBs. Carrying 50 pounds of explosives on their backs, the men yomped to the target mine, which was two miles away. The subsequent explosion put the mine out of action for more than a year. One commando was lost in the raid, but overall the mission was a great success.

8 THE BRUNEVAL RAID

27 FEBRUARY 1942

C COMPANY, 2ND BATTALION, 1ST AIRBORNE DIVISION

A smash and grab parachute drop that eliminated an important German radar location, paving the way for the Allied bombing of Europe

In previous attacks on this radar station in northern France, Flak gun emplacements had nullified the impact of bombing squadrons. The Germans boasted highly advanced radar systems that repeatedly helped knock the RAF out of the sky. As a result, British Commandos

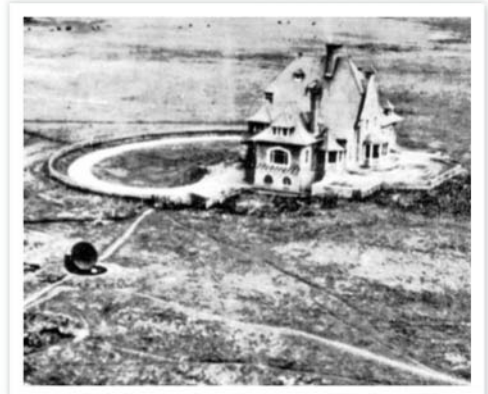
were sent on a mission that would be known as Operation Biting, or simply the Bruneval raid. Led by Major John Frost, C Company was tasked with the destruction of a house on the cliffs of Bruneval. Seemingly inconspicuous, it was actually being used as an important radio and signalling location for the Germans that acted as an early warning system of approaching Allied ships or planes.

To avoid the machine-gun posts and barbed-wire fences, C Company was dropped a fair distance behind the house, before advancing closer. Using their expert espionage skills, the commandos clinically took care of business as they killed every occupant of the house.

The next part of the operation was to destroy the radio; as this was being done, German fire came in from a neighbouring farmhouse. 12 of the company dealt with the attackers, and after the dismantling of the machinery was complete, it was time for extraction. At first, no contact could be made with the Royal Navy as the relief vessels had been nearly spotted by Kriegsmarine destroyers. Finally, the boats arrived under a hail of German machine-gun fire and the commandos escaped to safety, their mission complete. A day later, a lone Hurricane flew over the area undetected – Operation Biting had been a success.



The location was so well defended that, even for the commandos, a conventional raid was considered too risky



Above: RAF reconnaissance photo of the Würzburg radar array at Bruneval in December 1941

EXPERT OPINION



Why was the Bruneval Raid so important to British bombing raids in Europe?

In 1941, British reconnaissance aircraft had photographed the Würzburg radar installations, but experts in Britain were not sure what they were and how they functioned. Bomber Command was suffering heavy casualties in air raids over occupied Europe, and it was essential to understand how German defences worked so that they could be negated.

The capture of the radar enabled British scientists to analyse it and better understand it. It was this examination that confirmed to British scientists their suspicion that the Germans had developed radar that was resistant to the jamming methods that the British were currently using. A new solution was needed, and so the British put the Window countermeasure into use. The results were spectacular, and Germans were forced to develop new defensive strategies and technology.

9 OPENING THE STRAITS OF TIRAN

1956 NO 40 COMMANDO, NO 42 COMMANDO, NO 45 COMMANDO

Known as Operation Musketeer, British commandos were dropped into Egypt to protect the economic interests of their country

Arriving at first light, the Commando Royal Marines stormed the beaches using the same strategy as landings seen in World War II. Egyptian batteries were waiting for them, but the 40 and 42 Commandos were ably assisted by offshore fire, which provoked the Egyptians as they advanced.

The British assaulted Port Said, with oil tanks in the city being set alight as the port was choked by thick smoke. El Gamil airfield was captured within 30 minutes as Egyptian defences wilted in the face of expertly trained commandos and Centurion tanks. The 45 Commandos attacked Port Said in helicopters but were pegged back by heavy fire from Egyptian shore batteries, as well as some unfortunate friendly fire from British aircraft.

The unit also engaged in street fighting, but were on the receiving end of Egyptian snipers who picked them off at the city's Customs House and Navy House in particular. Some of the commandos were dropped in the wrong area, landing in a stadium under Egyptian control and having to make a hasty getaway. Port Said had been successfully assaulted

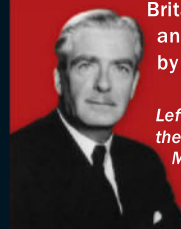
by the British, who met up with their French counterparts, ready to continue operations. Although Operation Musketeer was undertaken effectively, political issues meant Britain would never be successful in taking back the Suez Canal.

Below: The 45 Commando assault was the first time British forces used helicopters to lift men directly into a combat zone



THE SUEZ CRISIS

The Suez Crisis is often seen as a black mark on Britain's history. The 164-kilometre canal was integral to world trade and Britain and France were keen to maintain their grip on it. In 1951, Egypt, eager to gain hold of the canal, renounced the treaty it had with Britain. With two thirds of its oil imports coming through the canal, Britain was extremely concerned, and over the course of five months, sent 34,000 troops to the Middle East to protect its interests. Pressure from the UN and the USA, who were apprehensive of the conflict turning into a global war, forced Britain and France to pull out, and the canal was nationalised by the Egyptians.



Left: The Suez Crisis wrecked the reputation of British Prime Minister Sir Anthony Eden, who resigned shortly after the end of the conflict

THE BRITISH COMMANDO

THE UNIFORM, WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT THAT MADE THE COMMANDOS A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH IN THE FIELD

MACHINE GUN

A commando would usually be armed with a submachine gun. Both the American Thompson and the British Bren were used frequently, with the Sten gun also coming into use towards the end of WWII.

UNIFORM

The Denison Smock uniform was designed to be tough and durable. Unlike some special forces, however, the uniform didn't differ too much from the regular army. This was so they could blend into line with the regular recruits.

EQUIPMENT

Lightweight shoes rather than boots were worn for use on stealth operations. A rucksack included extra ammunition, tools, rope and other equipment that could be invaluable on a mission.

CAP

Berets were also common, but many commandos wore caps when on missions. The warm wool was especially useful in winter operations as was the green colour for added camouflage.

SIDEARM

Webley revolvers and Colt 45s were both used alongside the submachine gun. For covert missions, the De Lisle Carbine was used with a silencer. The iconic Fairbairn-Sykes knife was also used when combat got up close and personal.

10 OPERATION COLOSSUS

General Sir John Dill inspecting the first of the British commandos parachute troops in December 1940

14 FEBRUARY 1941 NO 2 COMMANDO

The first British airborne raid in the heart of fascist Italy

In February 1941, 35 commandos were dropped into the heart of Axis Italy. The mission was one of sabotage, and the objective was to destroy a railway viaduct in the Apennine Mountains, north of Naples. The Tragino Aqueduct was the water supply for three Italian ports, and the operation was led by Major T Pritchard, who trained his X troop for Colossus from nearby Malta. Along with the main raid, a diversionary attack was carried out in Foggia to draw the Italians away. Back in Tragino, the commandos had dropped in and the explosives were armed and ready to go.

The huge explosion successfully eliminated the aqueduct, but the raid soon got difficult as the extraction of the men became tricky. The original plan was to evacuate the

commandos via submarine, 60 miles away, but this idea had to be abandoned when the extraction site was discovered by the Italians. There were no plans for an alternate method of withdrawal, so the men were forced to split into four groups and escape across the countryside on foot.

Slowed down by the need to stay hidden in farms and small villages, they were soon all captured. The Italian spy and interpreter Fortunato Picchi, who was working for the British, was tortured and executed, while the others were sent to POW camps.

The mission was a success, but the aqueduct was soon repaired, nullifying the damage of the explosion and the mission. However, the operation proved that commandos could (and would) cause havoc behind enemy lines for the remainder of the war.

THE ALLIES IN ITALY

Always the junior to Hitler's Germany, Italy's war effort never really got going. In fact, Mussolini's failures in the Balkans meant German troops had to bail the Italian Royal Army out, spreading their forces thinly in other areas. After various commando skirmishes, the full invasion of Italy began in January 1943 as Allied divisions moved up through Sicily. Operation Husky was a huge success as the Duce was deposed within six months. The push northwards was more difficult as German troops fiercely defended northern Italy and the new Salo Republic, as the Allies neared the Alps and the border with Austria.

American troops in Italy are pinned down by the city of Lucca in Tuscany

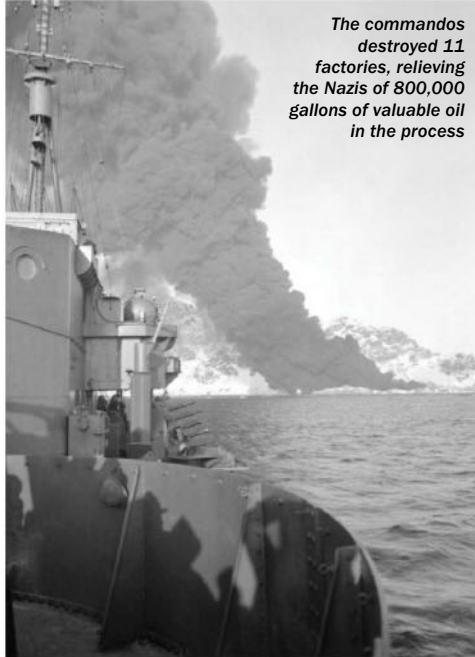


11 OPERATION CLAYMORE

3 MARCH 1941 NO 3 COMMANDO, NO 4 COMMANDO

The first of two British raids on the strategically important archipelago off the coast of Norway

The Lofoten Islands were home to several German glycerine factories that supported the manufacturing of weapons for the Third Reich. To put an end to this armament production, 500 commandos were sent to destroy the plants. After a three-day journey



The commandos destroyed 11 factories, relieving the Nazis of 800,000 gallons of valuable oil in the process

where seasickness ravaged the men, the British arrived on 4 March. Lowered down onto thick ice, the commandos stormed into the German compounds, completely surprising the Wehrmacht soldiers stationed there. Advancing through the chilly environment, the commandos swiftly rounded up the defenders and set charges on factories, military buildings and ships. 225 Germans were taken prisoner with the loss of no commandos. It has been reported that the local Norwegians were so happy at the sight of Allied soldiers that they offered ersatz coffee to them all.

The mission was such a success that the British saw the event as an ideal opportunity to poke fun at the Nazis. Lieutenant RL Wills sent a mocking telegram to 'A. Hitler' in Berlin saying: "You said in your last speech German troops would meet the British wherever

"LOWERED DOWN ONTO THICK ICE, THE COMMANDOS STORMED INTO THE GERMAN COMPOUNDS, COMPLETELY SURPRISING THE WEHRMACHT SOLDIERS STATIONED THERE"

EXPERT OPINION



How much did the commando raids in Norway affect the Nazi war machine?
Commando raids in Norway had a significant affect on the Third Reich's war machine, and had important knock-on effects with other

theatres of war. They provided an opportunity to gather intelligence through captured prisoners and restore British morale. The forays helped capture a set of rotor wheels for an Enigma machine and its codebooks. This meant that the British could read German naval codes at Bletchley Park, providing the crucial intelligence that helped British convoys avoid German U-boats.

Similarly, Operation Gunnarside in 1943, which was run by the British using Norwegian commandos, saw the targeting of the Norwegian heavy water production facilities to slow German development of an atomic bomb. These raids also helped stretch German military resources from other theatres. After Operation Archery, the Germans sent 30,000 troops to Norway to upgrade coastal and inland defences.

they landed. Where are your troops?" If the operation couldn't have gone well enough, as an added bonus, the commandos came across some spare rotors for a German Enigma machine, which were sent straight to Bletchley Park for study by Alan Turing and his team.

NORWAY UNDER THE NAZIS

When Hitler concocted his plans for European domination in the Führerbunker, Norway was right at the top of his list. With its extensive coastline, the country was an ideal base for the Kriegsmarine to launch its Atlantic operations. As well as their location, Norway and Sweden were also rich in ore for the Nazis to use in their war machines. Britain was aware of Hitler's desires but powerless to resist them as Operation Weserübung was launched.

Norway fell quickly, and under Operation Alphabet Allied soldiers left Norway in the summer of 1940. The commando raids such as the one at Lofoten were part of renewed efforts to take back Scandinavia.

Below: German troops occupied Norway for the majority of the war with many Norwegians (known as Quislings) even collaborating with the Nazis



12 OPERATION FLIPPER

10-18 NOVEMBER 1941
NO 11 COMMANDO,
NO 7 COMMANDO

The audacious attack on the headquarters of the Desert Fox

A huge gamble to kidnap or kill Field Marshal Rommel, the attack would be made 250 miles behind enemy lines. 27 men landed, exhausted and soaked by heavy rain. Using a local Arab shepherd as a guide, the commandos trudged through mud for days before reaching a cliff side. It was here that they were spotted by a watchdog and the alarm was raised. Their stealth compromised, the commandos came under fire and were forced to retreat after suffering many casualties. After the operation, the news came that Rommel wasn't even in his HQ that day, adding further to the failure.

Right: His leadership of the Afrika Korps and popularity in the Wehrmacht ranks made Rommel a major Allied target



13 OPERATION TELIC

MARCH 2003 3RD COMMANDO BRIGADE

The British attempts to take the strategic city of Basra during the Iraq War were spearheaded by commandos on the Al Faw Peninsula



The British operations in Iraq included units from all areas of the armed forces

Britain's military forces committed fully to Operation Telic, with 46,000 British soldiers making the trip to the Middle East. Heading for Iraq's second city, Basra, the 3rd Commando Brigade led an amphibious assault on the Al Faw Peninsula and the port of Umm Qasa in the southern part of the country.

The Rumaila oil fields were the primary target, and the capture of these would halt Saddam Hussein's Iraqi Army in its tracks. Hitting the ground from helicopters after being transported in by HMS Ark Royal and HMS Ocean, the commandos were ravaged by a sand storm as soon as they arrived in Iraq. While the British aerial bombardment took place, land and sea mines were cleared by the commandos before they swept into the peninsula. Many senior Iraqi Army officers were captured on the advance but one commando lost his life after being attacked by grenades and gunfire. The fight to Basra would only take 18 days. As soon as the British entered Basra, they stormed the Ba'ath Party headquarters and consolidated their grip on the city. The successful mission knocked down the door for the rest of the infantry to advance as the Iraqi resistance began to wilt and the march to Baghdad began.

“THE RUMAYLAH OIL FIELDS WERE THE PRIMARY TARGET, AND THE CAPTURE OF THESE WOULD HALT SADDAM HUSSEIN’S IRAQI ARMY IN ITS TRACKS”

14 OPERATION DRYAD

2-3 SEPTEMBER 1942 NO 62 COMMANDO

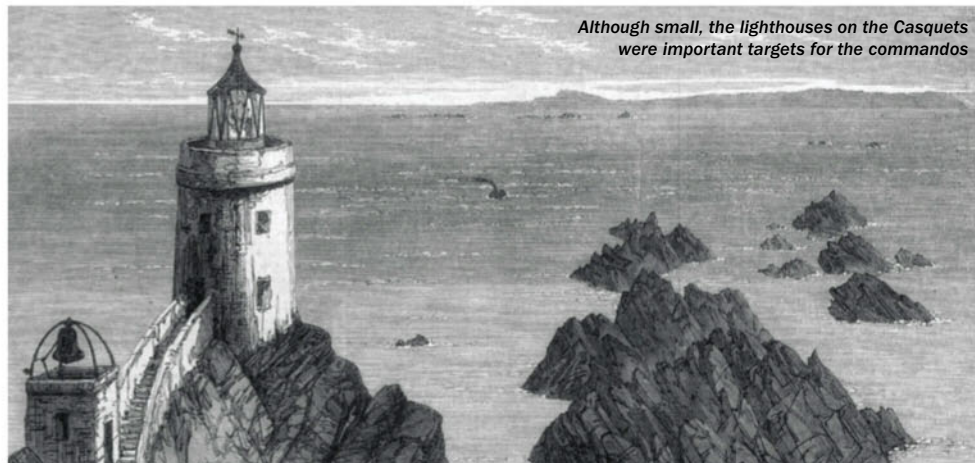
A daring assault on a rocky Channel Island outpost

The closest Hitler ever came to a conquest of Britain was the Channel Islands. The Casquets off Alderney were home to a German naval signalling station and also some secret codebooks. An attack on the complex had been attempted many times prior to September 1942, and this time a commando team was assigned to the task. The lighthouse was protected by razor-sharp rocks that were a magnet for shipwrecks, but the commandos managed to scramble on land after disembarking a torpedo boat 800 yards from the shore.

With the noise from the waves covering their movements, the 12 men scaled the cliffs up to the walls of the compound. The seven German defenders were armed with Steyr rifles and

grenades, so stealth was key. With a mixture of tactical espionage and German slackness (the defenders were either asleep or not willing to resist), the lighthouse was captured without a shot being fired. However, the raid was not over.

Upon leaving the rock, one of the commandos, Adam Orr, jumped aboard the escape boat, knife in hand, and in the choppy water stumbled into one of his fellow marines, Peter Kemp, stabbing him in the thigh. Worse still, another one of the group, Geoff Appleyard, broke the tarsal bone in his ankle when he slipped down from a rock. The mission complete and the injured safely aboard, the prisoners were interrogated upon the return to the mainland and provided the British with valuable information on German positions, movements and staffing.



Although small, the lighthouses on the Casquets were important targets for the commandos

THE CHANNEL ISLANDS UNDER THE NAZIS

undefended after the majority of residents were evacuated, the Channel Islands were assumed into the Greater German Reich in the summer of 1940. Under Nazi rule, every Channel Islander was issued with a new form of ID while anyone of British descent was deported to Germany. Alderney was home to the only concentration camps constructed on British territory and were built by Nazi slave labour. There was no official resistance movement on the islands, although ammunition was stolen from the Germans, and after the islands' liberation in 1945, all Nazi collaborators were arrested or even attacked.

Below: Nazi Germany saw the Channel Islands as part of the Atlantic Wall, so fortifications and batteries were built



15 ASSAULT ON WALCHEREN

1944

4 SPECIAL SERVICE BRIGADE

With D-Day over, the Allied companies advanced even further into German-occupied Europe, meeting more fierce resistance as they went

Antwerp was a major target for the Allies. Home to one of the biggest ports in Europe, its occupation was key to increasing the pressure on the shrinking Third Reich. However, the holding of the port was useless without access to the mouth of the River Scheldt. Walcheren was an island that was heavily fortified by the Germans with bunkers and coastal guns, and it prevented mines being cleared to allow ships in to the river estuary.

The island would be attacked under Operation Infatuate with a pincer movement from two directions. From the south, the commandos of 4 Special Service Brigade would attempt an amphibious landing while being supported by Canadian troops from the north. A gap in the dyke had been formed by earlier RAF bombing, and the Royal Navy drew German fire away from the infantry. The tower at Westkapelle was the first to fall, followed by a radar station.

The next objective was the batteries, which were eventually taken after many commando casualties. With only one battery left to take, the German commander negotiated the surrender of his remaining 4,000 troops in the area. The mission was complete, but before the day was over, disaster struck as one of the amphibious landing vehicles ran into a mine. 18 men were killed with a further nine wounded. The loss of life put a sour note on what was a tough yet successful operation.

The Anglo-Canadian operation was part of the much bigger Battle of the Scheldt, which opened up the port of Antwerp up to the Allies



The commandos were met with stiff German resistance, but every Wehrmacht soldier in Norway was one less on the Eastern Front



16 THE MÅLØY RAID

27 DECEMBER 1941

NO 2 COMMANDO, NO 3 COMMANDO, NO 4 COMMANDO

The British Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force combine forces to smash the morale of the Germans in Norway, with commandos leading from the front

By Christmas 1941, the Wehrmacht had occupied Norway for more than 18 months. In this time, the Germans had extracted copious amounts of ore to fuel their armed forces. To strike back, the Allies launched Operation Archery on the islands of Vågsøy and Måløy alongside Operation Anklet on the nearby Lofoten Islands.

The raiding force was a hybrid of three commando units and a Royal Norwegian Army Group totalling 525 men. There were no Axis warships to combat, but the Wehrmacht 181st Division along with substantial fortifications and air support would be a tough nut to crack. Finishing up their Christmas dinner on HMS Kenya, the troops were deployed. The first move was taken by the Royal Navy, which opened fire on the coastal defences, followed by the RAF, which provoked the Luftwaffe into action while also creating a smoke screen for the commandos to advance under. Initially surprised, the Germans fought back with force but their resistance was stifled by the British floating reserve that blocked reinforcements coming from the north of Vågsøy. The commandos escaped having killed 150 Germans and taken 98 prisoner. They were also joined by 71 Norwegians who were fleeing their occupied country.

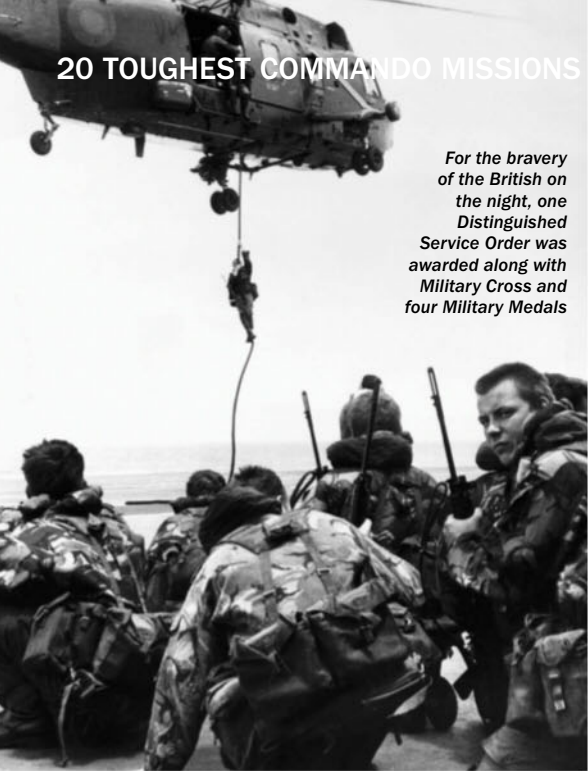
The results were not limited to land, as nine ships were sunk and four aircraft downed. The Måløy Raid was a successful precursor to Operation Claymore and demonstrated that the British Armed Forces could work together in one cohesive unit.

MORE GERMAN TROOPS ON THE WESTERN FRONT

The attacks on Norway prevented the Nazis from acquiring more resources from the country, but also eased the pressure on the Soviet Union. Operation Barbarossa was still raging on and Stalin was getting desperate as Moscow came under siege. The success of the commandos in Norway provoked the Nazi hierarchy into pumping more troops westwards rather than east. The Atlantic Wall was reinforced with 30,000 extra men as Hitler realised the importance of holding onto Scandinavia. The next summer, the decisive Battle of Stalingrad began as the Red Army started to turn the tide. The decline of the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front owes a lot to the commandos in the west.

Commandos watch as an ammunition dump in Vågsøy burns





For the bravery of the British on the night, one Distinguished Service Order was awarded along with Military Cross and four Military Medals

17 BATTLE OF MOUNT HARRIET

11 JUNE 1982 42 COMMANDO BATTALION

If the Falklands War were to have a quick resolution, the commandos needed to be at their best up on Mount Harriet

Mass disarmament and demobilisation after World War II meant the numbers of commandos began to dwindle during the 1950s. However, in the modern British military, all Royal Marines are commando trained, meaning the distinction between the two titles has been blurred significantly. One conflict in which this new wave of commandos excelled was during the Falklands War. 3 Commando Brigade was one of the few units that survived the cut backs and were a major part of the land force in Operation Corporate. On 11 June, 42 Commando Battalion was tasked with securing Mount Harriet, on the road to Port Stanley.

Supported by 29 Commando Regiment, Royal Artillery and the Welsh Guards, 3 Commando Brigade assaulted the Argentine positions in

the hills. Traversing through tricky minefields, a full-frontal attack was considered too risky, so instead they undertook a flanking manoeuvre. Artillery fired from captured weapons, so as to make the Argentines believe it was their men doing the firing, reinforced the commandos.

The main battle began at 10pm and four mortar positions were cleared in 45 minutes. Six Argentines were killed with more than 20 captured. Supported by invaluable 'bunker buster' fire from the artillery, the British worked their way around the mountain towards Goat Ridge and Mount Tumbledown. Two British soldiers died that night, Corporal Laurence G Watts and Acting Corporal Jeremy Smith, but the objective was complete as the road to Stanley appeared ahead.

EXPERT OPINION



How were the commandos who served in the Falklands War different from those in World War II? How had their training/equipment/role progressed?

After World War II, most commando units were disbanded or re-rolled, leaving just 3 Commando Brigade of the Royal Marines.

However, while only 3 Commando Brigade were official commando units, the two Parachute Regiment battalions - 2 and 3 Para - that were sent south as part of an enlarged 3 Commando Brigade had very much retained the commando ethos. Their training still taught them physical and psychological endurance, the need to be aggressive, and the ability to strike hard and fast at the enemy. Also, while armed with modern equipment and weaponry, the style of operations that 3 Commando Brigade conducted as part of Operation Corporate remained much the same as those of their World War II forebears; coastal raiding, infantry assault and combined operations were all vital in securing victory.

1 THE ARGENTINES PREPARE

Seeing Mount Harriet is a key area, the Argentines heavily reinforce it. Extensive minefields are placed to the south and the west while firing positions are built into the slopes.

2 THE BRITISH STRATEGY

Emerging from Mount Challenger, 42 Commando harass the Argentines from the west. This is a deliberate ploy to make the enemy believe that a full-frontal assault is coming from Mount Challenger. In fact, a flanking attack is being planned.

3 COMPANIES ON THE MOVE

Advancing from the east and west respectively, K and L Companies prepare to engage the enemy. J Company provides back-up fire from Mount Wall to the west as a diversion. After an hour's delay to locate a lost platoon of Welsh Guards, the code word 'Vesuvius' is uttered and the battle begins.

4 ASSAULTING THE HILL

Four Argentine mortar positions are cleared within 45 minutes, but Larry Watts is struck down by fire. The troops are making good ground, and whenever their progress is checked, artillery is called in to help. At times, both Argentine and British shells fall together, causing confusion on both sides.

5 SEIZING THE INITIATIVE

The companies show great bravery and even greater skill during the battle. Machine-gun positions and bunkers are taken out swiftly and accurately, with 66mm anti-tank rockets and phosphorous grenades proving extremely effective. After six and a half hours of fighting, Mount Harriet has been taken.

6 ONWARDS TO GOAT RIDGE

An artillery barrage on Goat Ridge had flushed the Argentines out of their positions, so it is deserted once the British arrive. With all objectives complete, a few more outposts to the north and south have to be taken before the final push to Stanley.

THE TWO LOSSES AT MOUNT HARRIET

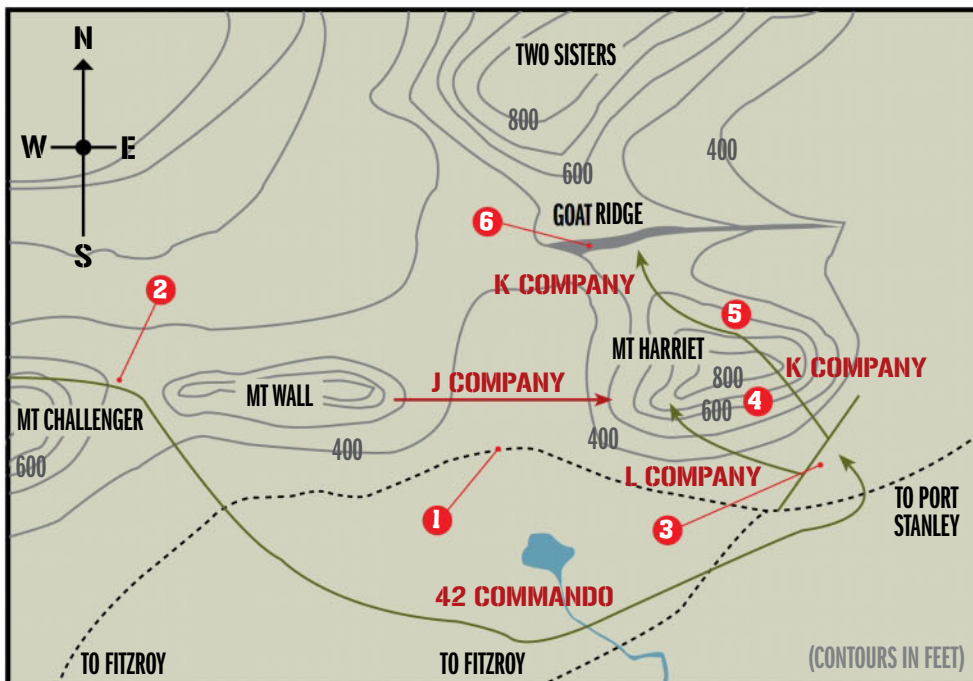
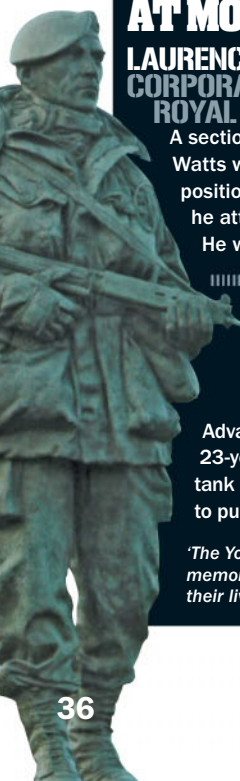
LAURENCE G WATTS
CORPORAL 42 COMMANDO,
ROYAL MARINES

A section commander on the day, Corporal Watts was engaged in the lower-eastern positions of the battle. He was killed when he attempted to attack a tented position. He was 27.

JEREMY SMITH
ACTING CORPORAL
42 COMMANDO,
ROYAL MARINES

Advancing through a hail of gunfire, 23-year-old Corporal Smith's 66mm anti-tank rocket was shot just as he was about to pull the trigger.

'The Yomper' statue stands in Portsmouth in memory of the 225 British servicemen who lost their lives in the Falklands War





18 OPERATION AQUATINT

12-13 SEPTEMBER 1942 62 COMMANDO

The often-forgotten pre-D-Day commando raid on Normandy

Lessons learned from failed missions, such as Aquatint, helped D-Day become the success it was

Three weeks after the disastrous events at Dieppe, the British were keen to bounce back. Operation Aquatint was essentially a small-scale D-Day. On the night of 12 September, the commandos landed at St Laurent to the east of Cherbourg. Their Motor Torpedo Boat (MTB) emerged silently from the mist as they clambered into a Goatley to make the short distance to the shoreline. It was just after midnight when pistol and machine fire began to rain down from the village above the beach. Illuminated by a German searchlight, the Commandos were peppered with fire. Worse still, the gunners had spotted the MTB and began firing on what was the commandos' only

means of escape. Now in a state of panic, the British servicemen scrambled into the Goatley and went back out to sea while still under fire.

As the commandos hurried back, shells flew over their heads towards the MTB. Luckily, none of the projectiles hit their target. After the barrage had stopped, the MTB sneaked back to the beach to extract any stranded commandos but eventually had to retreat back to Portsmouth harbour as morning broke. The raid was a disaster. 11 of the men would never return to British shores. Another failure so soon after Dieppe was damaging to British morale and the commandos had to pick themselves up for the tougher operations that lay ahead.

GOATLEY BOATS

Used most famously by the Cockleshell Heroes, the 'Goatley' proved to be an effective vessel for a variety of commando missions. Designed by Fred Goatley of the Saunders-Roe marine engineering company, he met with Major Herbert Hasler, one of the Cockleshell Heroes, to discuss his invention. For amphibious operations, the British required a strong, light and collapsible craft that could be used with stealth. With a wooden bottom and canvas sides, the Goatley was ideal. 1,000 were ordered by the War Office and each boat could be assembled in just two minutes by two men. It would become invaluable.



Silent but deadly, the Goatley could get commandos as close to their target as necessary

19 OPERATION AMBASSADOR

14-15 JULY 1940 NO 3 COMMANDO

One of the earliest commando operations focused on the Channel Island of Guernsey

The closest the Wehrmacht came to setting foot on the British Isles was the wartime occupation of the Channel Islands

In July 1940, the British Commando regiment was barely a month old. The objective of Ambassador was to destroy German aircraft on Guernsey, with 140 men landing at three separate points of the island. Advancing inland, the commandos found that their reconnaissance had failed them and the Germans were in completely different positions than first thought. With incorrect planning, the commandos made a swift retreat back to their boats. This retreat would prove disastrous as gunner John McGoldrick was lost and presumed drowned. Operation Ambassador represented a huge learning curve for the commandos.

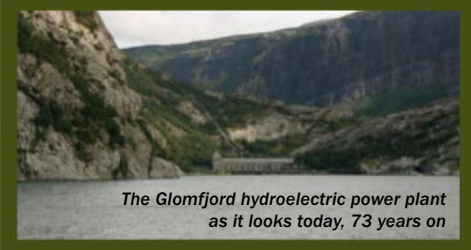


20 DISASTER IN THE FJORDS OF NORWAY

20 SEPTEMBER 1942
NO 2 COMMANDO

Operation Muskatoon demonstrated that not all the commando missions in Norway went to plan

Norway was a frequent target for the commandos, and Operation Muskatoon was no different. This time the objective was a hydroelectric plant in Glomfjord. The ten commandos were accompanied by two Norwegian corporals on the mission as they were transported via submarine to what was a remote fjord. The factory was destroyed, but this time not all the commandos managed to escape. Seven were captured and taken to Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp. Under the Commando Order, they were executed on 23 October 1942.



The Glomfjord hydroelectric power plant as it looks today, 73 years on

Great Battles

PORT ARTHUR

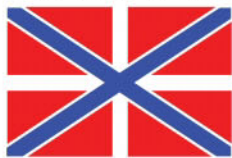
MANCHURIA, 8-9 FEBRUARY 1904

At the start of Asia's first modern conventional war, Japanese tenacity clashed against Russian imperialism, with devastating results

WORDS MIGUEL MIRANDA



OPPOSING FORCES



RUSSIA LEADER

Admirals Evgeny Ivanovich Alekseyev and Oskar Victorovich Stark

FLEET

The Far East Fleet, also called the Pacific Squadron, had seven battleships, 13 cruisers, and 40 destroyers

GAME CHANGERS

Aside from a garrison that was more than 53,000 strong, Port Arthur was bristling with several hundred artillery pieces



JAPAN LEADERS

Admiral Heihachiro Togo

FLEET

Six battleships, 10 cruisers, 18 destroyers, and numerous gunboats and minelayers

GAME CHANGERS

The Imperial Japanese Navy's battleships, cruisers and destroyers were the pride of British shipyards, and it was the most advanced fleet in Asia at the time

A Russian battleship explodes under bombardment from Japanese forces

The 16 months of the Russo-Japanese War are remembered by posterity as the backdrop to the naval Battle of Tsushima. To this day, it still looms large in the popular imagination as a brilliant episode when Japanese zeal and seamanship scrapped the Russian Navy.


But the historic confrontation between two great Asiatic powers began with a decisive, if rather comical, episode that transpired in modern-day Liaoning, China. Every serious student who

revisits this period, be they a historian, writer or enthusiast, comes face-to-face with its most vital naval engagement: Port Arthur.

It was here that an inconclusive naval battle had to be settled by siege warfare, the type that foreshadowed the carnage of World War I, where artillery and machine guns en masse obliterated soldiers. Ultimately, Port Arthur was where the European concept of total war was fought over a few square miles in China by two sworn enemies. One was prepared, if over-

cautious; the other brash and bungling. The 11-month-long battle for the port began when a daring assault was launched by a determined Japanese fleet on Russia's own armada, the Far East Fleet. This climactic sequence of events was a result of incomprehension and tireless subterfuge between military rivals.

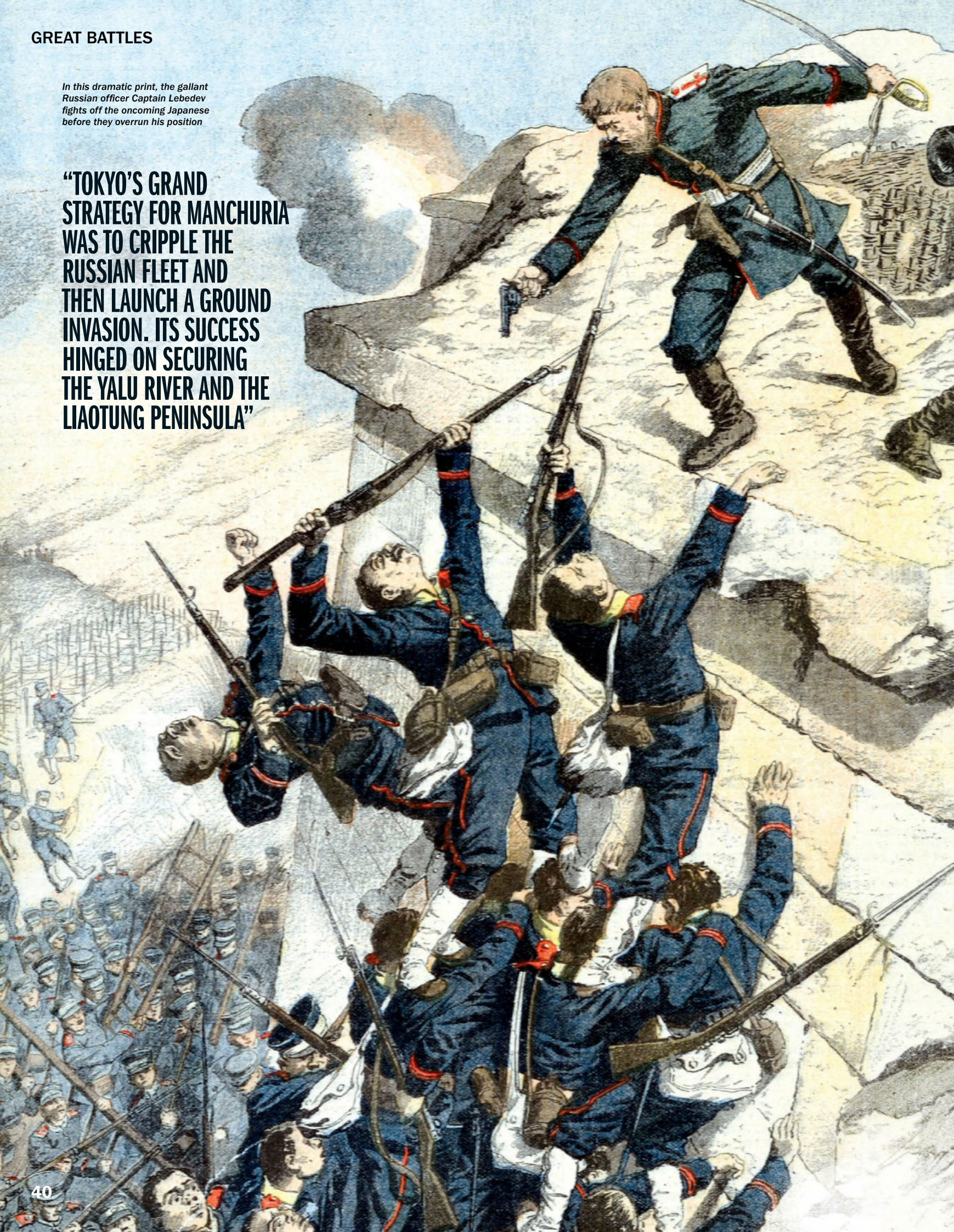
Situated in the Liaotung Peninsula in the Yellow Sea (known today as the Liaodong Peninsula), whoever controlled Port Arthur could deploy a modern navy deep into the Pacific



“IT WAS HERE THAT AN INCONCLUSIVE NAVAL BATTLE HAD TO BE SETTLED BY SIEGE WARFARE, THE TYPE THAT FORESHADOWED THE CARNAGE OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR”

In this dramatic print, the gallant Russian officer Captain Lebedev fights off the oncoming Japanese before they overrun his position

“TOKYO’S GRAND STRATEGY FOR MANCHURIA WAS TO CRIPPLE THE RUSSIAN FLEET AND THEN LAUNCH A GROUND INVASION. ITS SUCCESS HINGED ON SECURING THE YALU RIVER AND THE LIAOTUNG PENINSULA”



Ocean and hold sway over Korea and China's lengthy coastline.

Port Arthur was also a gateway to Manchuria, where untapped natural resources lured the great industrial powers. Seizing Manchuria for its own gain was precisely Japan's goal during the First Sino-Japanese War. Entering Korea on the pretext of defusing a civil war, Japan's European-trained army and navy – a conscript force that was drilled to perfection and alight with purpose – trounced the backward Qing forces. In 1894, an 18,000-strong Japanese army seized the Liaotung Peninsula for itself from the Chinese.

With the Treaty of Shimonoseki concluding hostilities, Russian spies and diplomats swept in to deny Japan its prize – the Yellow Sea's most viable natural harbour. This was done in the aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion, when the Qing government and Russia agreed to a treaty that granted the latter control over the Liaotung Peninsula for the next 25 years.

A full decade passed before the inevitable score-settling. After a year of frustrating

conferences and bilateral talks, Japan severed its diplomatic ties with Russia in 1904. St Petersburg sniffed at the rebuke, failing to discern Japan's intentions. Come February, the Imperial Japanese Navy's squadrons under Admiral Heihachiro Togo were steaming towards Korea and Port Arthur, where an oblivious Russian Far East fleet and garrison lay.

The adversaries could not have been more equally matched. The Imperial Japanese Navy of 1904 was far removed from the menacing Axis power a half century later. Rather, it was a fine institution with distinct European sensibilities and British flair.

Before the war, the eminent British naval enthusiast and writer Fred T Jane entertained many Japanese officers. He thought them Philistines, highly professional but disinterested with anything outside naval matters. But they could converse in English – as a matter of fact, the IJN's officer and sailor uniforms were patterned after the British Navy.

Most important, Japan's most fearsome warships were made in England, and its guns, coal engines and torpedoes were all English. Even meals on board were alternately Japanese and English.

An imperial reckoning

Japan mustered its Combined Fleet at Sasebo at the beginning of February 1904. By the fifth of the month, troop ships were sailing for Korea escorted by Rear Admiral Sotokichi Uriu's seven cruisers and 12 torpedo boats. A distinction must be made between either type: the early-20th-century cruiser was for skirmishing enemy ships and Japan had 25 of these, 11 were armoured and judged the heaviest and finest in the world.

One vessel, on the other hand, was considered the menace of the seas – the torpedo boat. Decades before World War I, the

torpedo was considered the most cutting-edge naval weapon of the age.

The nautical mailed fist of Imperial Japan, however, did not deploy for war until 6 February, when Admiral Togo led his fleet to Port Arthur. Time was of the essence, because intelligence indicated the Russians were not steaming for Japan. If they were, a costly battle at sea would be inevitable.

Russia spent more than a decade preparing its Far Eastern war machine. When Peter the Great set the Russian Empire on the path to modernisation, he declared that its only allies were its army and its navy. Two centuries since and these words rang truer than ever. Russian autocracy under the stewardship of the Romanov tzars allowed for rapid industrialisation fed by an over-abundance of raw material.

Tzar Nicholas II, himself raised an officer in a bubble of royal privilege, maintained Russia's singular course during his reign. In 1904, Russia had 1.2 million soldiers and a navy whose preoccupations included the Baltic, the Black Sea, and the Pacific.

Between Vladivostok and Port Arthur, however, was the might of the Far East Fleet. According to records from the war, the Russians had seven battleships at their disposal; three of them were of the French-designed Petropavlovsk class anchored in Port Arthur. These were augmented by 13 armoured and unarmoured cruisers, more than 40 destroyers, and gunboats.

A distinct advantage of the Russians was their coastal artillery. The fortifications of the Liaotung Peninsula included three enormous citadels bristling with guns. The commander of the Russian garrison, General Anatoly Stoessel, had at his disposal several hundred towed artillery pieces of superior quality that could be placed to defeat an enemy fleet.

“THE DAMAGE TO THE RUSSIAN FLEET WAS HARDLY CRIPPLING. PERHAPS IT WAS THE COST TO THEIR PEACE OF MIND THAT DISTRESSED PORT ARTHUR'S GARRISON THE MOST”

Below: The first Japanese bombardment of the Russian fleet lasted for just 40 minutes



The Japanese, on the other hand, had relentlessly prepared for the war they were about to start. Admiral Togo commanded six battleships of the Shikishima and Fuji-classes. These were British made, their hulls laid down in the yards of Elswick and Barrow, and averaged 15,000 tons. The battleships were heavier and better armed with 12 and 10-inch guns. The IJN had more than 50 destroyers and cruisers to hand.

Tokyo's grand strategy for Manchuria was to cripple the Russian fleet and then launch a ground invasion. Its success hinged on securing the Yalu River – a much easier objective – and the Liaotung Peninsula with its excellent docks at Dalny and Port Arthur. Japan actually had the advantage in a ground war. Once mobilisation began, transporting army divisions into Manchuria was possible once the sea lanes were in the IJN's control. The Russians only had faraway Vladivostok and a single track of the Trans-Siberian Railway to supply their Eastern forces. It was a different equation at sea where the deciding factor was the element of surprise.

A shattering climax

What followed was a game of cat and mouse. On 7 February, the Russian gunboat Koreetz engaged Japanese torpedo boats in the waters between Inchon, Korea (then known as Chemulpo) and the Liaotung Peninsula. This small battle was inconclusive and, remarkably, once the Russian gunboat withdrew, the Japanese landed on Inchon unopposed and severed the telegraph lines to Port Arthur.

The next day, 8 February, Admiral Togo's warships were waiting 60 miles to the east of Port Arthur. The firepower at Togo's disposal was enormous. His six battleships were accompanied by 10 cruisers and 18 destroyers.

But there was no battle for the Russian officers, and their crews were unaware of the grave danger beyond the horizon. The opening shots of the war came from 11 Japanese destroyers dispatched by Togo to engage the Russians, except the Russians and their ships remained docked in Port Arthur, ignorant of the approaching menace.

These Japanese destroyers were built in the yards of Thornycroft and Yarrow & Sons during the previous six years. In the small hours of 9 February, they approached Port Arthur undetected and opened a new chapter in the history of naval warfare.

The British war correspondent Frederic William Unger best described the scene in vivid detail. "The weather was perfect. It was not cold, and the sky was clear, with a light southerly breeze and a hazy horizon." The resulting engagement was a poor one.

The Russian cruisers and battleships were outlined by the lights from the docks and the town in Port Arthur. The Japanese silently

"IT WAS A DIFFERENT EQUATION AT SEA WHERE THE DECIDING FACTOR WAS THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE"

Great Battles

PORT ARTHUR 1904

01 The Liaotung Peninsula's terrain With steep hills overlooking the Yellow Sea, the Russians built interlinked fortresses on the peaks above Port Arthur that were provisioned with munitions and supplies. Scores of 150mm and 120mm guns, as well as giant mortars, kept Admiral Togo's ships from attacking head on during 9 February.

04 The torpedo boat enclave Hidden along the edge of Port Arthur's shallow harbour was a dock for Russian torpedo boats. Various accounts reveal a poor combat record for this type of vessel. In multiple engagements, torpedo boats on both sides often missed their targets. The unexploded torpedoes were then found the next day floating to shore.

02 The Trans-Siberian railway Railroads played a crucial role in Russia's aggressive territorial expansion. The Trans-Siberian railway allowed it to exploit Manchuria's vast natural resources. But the single track to Port Arthur proved vulnerable and ultimately useless. By July 1904, it was under Japanese control along with much of the surrounding terrain.

07 A futile last stand Once the Russian fleet was trapped in Port Arthur, the Japanese Army took the initiative and spent the rest of 1904 wresting the peninsula from its garrison. For the first time ever, the dreaded Maxim machine gun proved its worth, mowing down thousands of attacking Japanese infantry. The Russians surrendered on 1 January 1905.

06 Warships in, warships out When the Japanese returned at midday on 9 February, Admiral Togo left nothing to chance. Steaming from the east to meet the Russians were five battleships and nine cruisers. Once arrayed four miles off Port Arthur, they opened fire, unleashing at least 300 shells on the Far East Fleet and the hills above.

05 The Destroyers sow mischief When Admiral Togo sent his swift destroyers to wreak havoc on the Russians on the evening between 8-9 February, the results were mild. Approaching Port Arthur in the dark and imitating Russian signals, the destroyers launched their torpedoes and inflicted minimal damage before withdrawing, leaving two battleships and a cruiser damaged.

03 The Far East Fleet According to the best assessment of British analysts, in the beginning of 1904, Russia's formidable Far East Fleet possessed seven battleships, 13 cruisers, 40 destroyers, 17 torpedo boats, and 10 gunboats. Russian naval officers were competent gentlemen and the British naval enthusiast Fred T. Jane thought the Russian navy superb.

Korea and drove the puny Russian garrison back across the Yalu River.

To anticipate the eventual ground invasion of the Liaotung Peninsula, Togo was instructed to enforce a blockade. On the night of 24 February, five hulking merchant ships were towed as close as possible to Port Arthur and set alight. The objective this time was to bottle the Far East Fleet, leaving it trapped and at the mercy of Togo's guns. This effort was not very successful and the Japanese soon turned to laying sea mines.

Almost two months after the debacle at Port Arthur, the Russian fleet suffered another irreversible loss, one that endured as part of the Russo-Japanese War's colourful mythology.

On 13 April, the Russian Admiral Stepan Makarov perished when his flagship, the battleship *Petropavlovsk*, struck a mine on a return trip to Port Arthur. From that single disaster onward, the proud Russian Navy would disport itself with ineptitude and poor foresight, resulting in thousands dead and the eventual disaster in Tsushima a year later.

Despite their strenuous operations and manoeuvres, the struggle for Port Arthur left the IJN with very light casualties. The only serious loss was the battleship *Hatsuse*, sunk by a mine on 15 May 1904. Another ship, the cruiser *Yoshiro*, suffered a collision and an inconsequential gunboat, *Miyako*, was

"13 DAYS AFTER PORT ARTHUR, THE IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY ARRIVED IN KOREA AND DROVE THE PUNY RUSSIAN GARRISON BACK ACROSS THE YALU RIVER"

destroyed by shellfire. In a startling contrast, to wrest Port Arthur from the Russians, the Japanese Army suffered more than 90,000 dead and twice this number wounded.

With a naval blockade in place, intense ground combat followed as the Japanese Third Army, assembled at the captured port of Dalny, set out to defeat the Russian garrison. This was merciless trench warfare on unforgiving terrain. Lasting 11 months, the turning point was the gruelling struggle to secure 203 Meter Hill, the single commanding height that protected Port Arthur below.

On 5 December, General Maresuke NogI massed his artillery and unleashed hell on 203 Meter Hill's defenders. By the end of January 1905, General Stoessel and General NogI agreed to terms of surrender. The following month the Russians were beaten in Mukden. On 9 August, US President Theodore Roosevelt

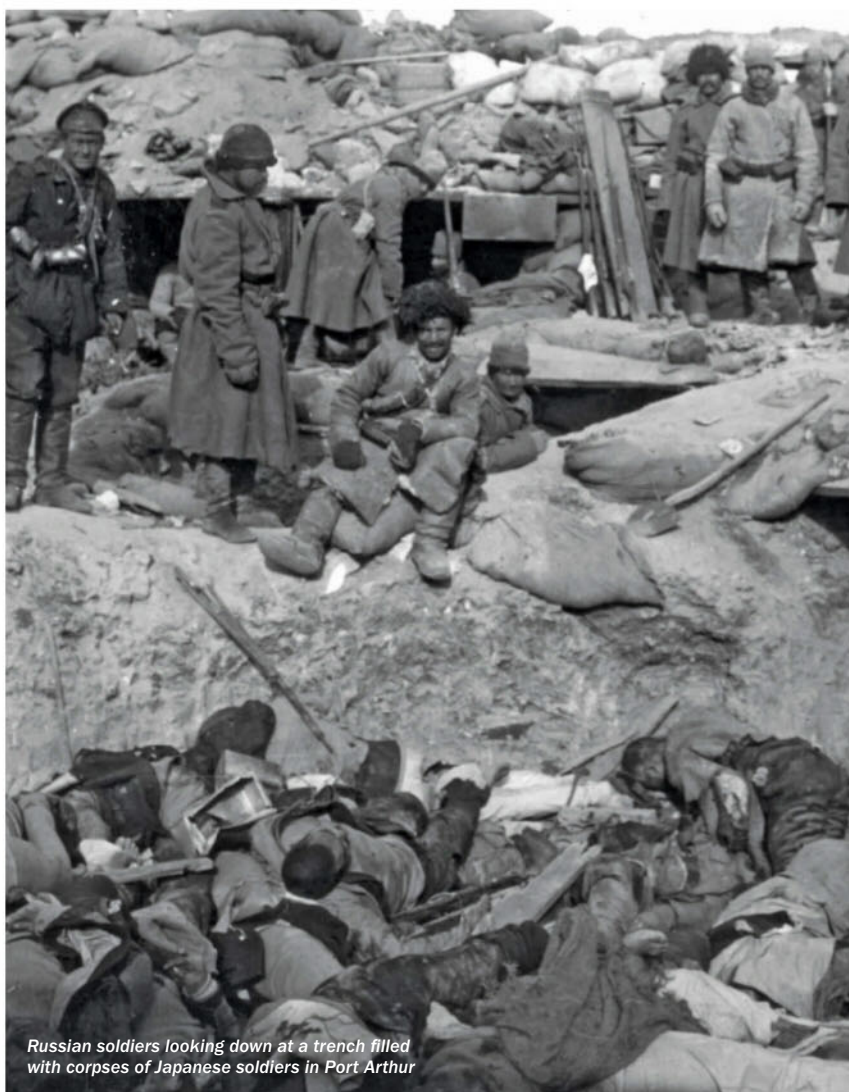
entertained Russian and Japanese delegations in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, for the sake of a peace treaty.

At the end of the war, the Russian commander of the Far East, General Aleksey Kuroptkin, began writing *The Russian Army In The Japanese War*. It was a damning assessment of Russia's ineptness despite it having better resources for prosecuting a conventional war on land and sea. "Our fleet was neither ready nor concentrated," he wrote. In his book, Kuroptkin admitted the Russian military's estimation of the Japanese was a poor one and contributed to their defeat.

This sentiment was confirmed by Jane in his book *The Imperial Russian Navy: Its Past, Present, And Future*, where he quoted an unnamed Russian officer's opinion of the Japanese: "Their navy is good – too good. But they would never fight Russia fairly. They would invite us to dinner, then poison us, or something like that! Treacherous. They should not be trusted."

The words, first published in 1899, were prophetic. Years later, an unnamed Imperial Japanese Navy officer would confide to Jane that: "The Russians are brave – very brave. But not very many are good. And they are savages."

Port Arthur and the Russo-Japanese War's outcome irrevocably proved that East Asia was now under the dominion of the Land of the Rising Sun.



Russian soldiers looking down at a trench filled with corpses of Japanese soldiers in Port Arthur



General Maresuke NogI standing victorious amid the wreckage. The veteran knew Port Arthur's terrain well

..... ●

“He never barked like the other gunnery sergeants but ruled like a wiser, older brother looking after his younger siblings, with humour and a style all his own”

**William Douglas Lansford,
5th Marine Division**

..... ●

John Basilone became a celebrity in the US after returning from Guadalcanal



Heroes of the Medal of Honor

JOHN BASILONE

The New Jersey champion boxer almost single-handedly repelled a Japanese onslaught and became a legend of the US Marines

WORDS JACK PARSONS

John Basilone is considered a hero of the US Marine Corps, however there are few outside of the corps that now remember him. While he was alive, John was a national hero who was honoured with parades and had highways, landmarks and even a Destroyer warship named after him. He was the first marine to win a Medal of Honor during World War II and remains one of the most highly decorated marines of all time, also earning a Purple Heart and Navy Cross.

John was born into a big Italian family and grew up in Raritan, a small town in New Jersey. He was the sixth child of ten to Dora and Salvatore Basilone, who had emigrated to the United States from Naples in 1903. Aged 16, despite his mother's wishes, he dropped out of school and, always a keen sportsman, worked as a golf caddy for the local country club. However, this wasn't enough for him and in July 1934, aged 18, he enlisted in the US Army. He served for three years with Company D, 16th Infantry, including a long stretch based in the Philippines. However, during his time in the army he achieved little, except proving that he was a champion light-heavyweight boxer – undefeated in 19 bouts.

Still, Basilone looked on those formative years fondly for the rest of his life, earning himself the nickname 'Manila John' because he talked about his experiences in the Philippines so much. Discharged from the army as a private first class, he worked for a few months as a truck driver in Maryland but soon hankered to return to Manila once more. Believing that joining the Marines would get him there faster than re-enlisting in the army, Basilone joined The Few, The Proud in 1940. But when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor a year into Basilone's training, his plans to return the Philippines were scuppered.

Determined to stop the spread of the Japanese Empire, which was threatening the supply routes between the US and Australia, the Americans led the Allies' first offensive in the region. They landed on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands on 7 August 1942, surprising the Japanese so that they were able to seize an airstrip. However, the Japanese clung on tenaciously, with the so-called Tokyo Express, high-speed warships, delivering reinforcements every night to try and retake the island.

It was in the midst of one of these fierce counterattacks that Basilone entered Marine lore. Along with 4,157 others from the 7th Marine Regiment, Basilone formed part of an unbroken line of defence to keep the Japanese from reaching the Henderson Field airstrip. Known as the Lunga Perimeter, the Allies commanded a series of ridges that the Japanese would have to climb after traipsing through miles of dense jungle, muddy ravines and rivers. But this didn't deter them.

After already being beaten back at the Battles of the Tenaru and Edson's Ridge, the

Japanese tried a new tactic. On 12 October 1942, engineers broke a 15-mile trail through the jungle to the Lunga Perimeter. Between 16-18 October, the notorious 2nd Infantry Division of the Imperial Japanese Army, also known as the Courageous Division, began its march up this path; each soldier carried one artillery shell plus his pack and rifle. While the trail took several days longer than anticipated, forcing the troops onto half rations to compensate, when they finally attacked on the evening of 23 October, they still caught US troops unaware.

Caught on the back foot, Allied forces were hastily rearranged to compensate, leaving Basilone and the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, left to hold the entire 2,500 yards of the perimeter east of the Lunga River. On the night of 24 October, just after 9.30pm, a regiment of approximately 3,000 2nd Division Japanese soldiers descended on Basilone and the two gun crews of 15 men that he commanded. Basilone ordered them to allow the enemy to get within 30 yards and then "let them have it." This strategy successfully wiped out the first wave of attackers.



Marines cross the Matanikau River in Guadalcanal, 1942

01 The first wave

When a regiment of 3,000 Japanese soldiers attacks, Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone is commanding two sections of machine guns, made up of just 15 men. Basilone orders them to wait for the enemy to get within 30 yards and then "let them have it." This strategy successfully wipes out the first wave of attackers.

02 Fire fight

Wave after wave of the enemy keep on coming, and the Marines soon suffer casualties. A mortar explosion kills or injures many of the gun crew, leaving just two to carry on fighting with Basilone. The gunnery sergeant responds by moving an extra gun into position and manning two at once.

03 Battlefield repairs

In an explosion, two of the four heavy machine guns are damaged. One is beyond saving, however, Basilone manages to repair the other while working in the dark using just his fingers. He then personally mans it, holding the line.

05 'Virtual annihilation'

When the last of the ammo runs out shortly before dawn on the second day, Basilone fights off the rest of the Japanese soldiers using a .45 pistol and machete. When reinforcements arrive, they find the valley littered with fallen bodies. Basilone's Medal of Honor citation described his actions as "the virtual annihilation of a Japanese regiment."



“He came from nothing and to greatness. I think that’s what we all honour: the guy that didn’t have anything, that made it. He just ran off and became a world hero. The whole country honoured him”

Clinton Watters, 5th Marine Division

However, fighting in the dark and in the midst of heavy rain, the US forces were hammered with grenades, mortars and machine gun shells. A mortar explosion killed or injured many of the gun crew, so only Basilone and two others were left to hold the line. Basilone responded by positioning a second machine gun and firing both at the enemy at once. They kept up the fight for 48 hours.

Inevitably, in such a long shoot out, the machine gun ammunition began to run low. However, the supply line had been breached and Japanese troops stood between Basilone and the ammunition dump. Certain that the position would fall if the gun teams were not resupplied, Basilone headed down the trail alone, fighting his way 100 yards to the dump. After returning with several belts of ammunition, he set out for the unmanned gun pits to his right, knowing that the heavy weapons were essential to defending the ridge.

However, when he got to the gun positions, he found the two unoccupied machine guns were jammed. Working in the darkness with only his fingers to guide him, he managed to fix one of the guns. He then used it to rain down heavy fire on the Japanese forces that were still coming. At several points, the Marines were forced to push back the mounting pile of bodies to maintain a clear field of fire.

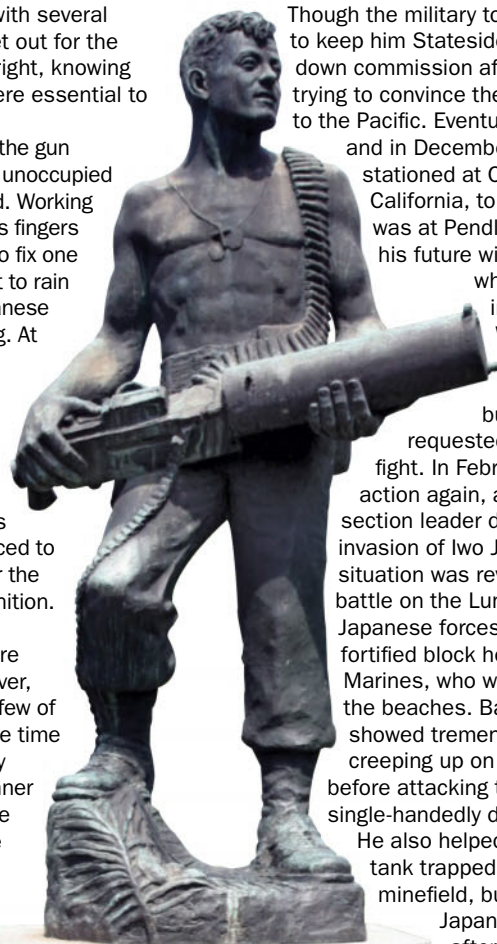
As the battle raged on, facing eight separate waves of attack, Basilone was forced to make several more trips for the desperately needed ammunition. In the end, it is believed Basilone’s platoon fired more than 25,000 rounds. However, facing such vast numbers, few of the gunners survived. By the time reinforcements arrived, only Basilone and one other gunner held the ridge, with Basilone fighting with just a machete and .45 pistol. However, by this time, the Japanese troops were annihilated; the bodies of fallen soldiers filling the valley below. The rest of the 2nd Division’s attack was also

In his hometown, Basilone is commemorated as the ‘hero of Guadalcanal’

pushed back, marking a turning point for the Allies, in which the Japanese eventually forfeited Guadalcanal that November.

In the light of the new day, Basilone was a war hero. Decorated with a Medal of Honor in Melbourne, Australia, he was also shipped home to attend ticker tape parades and encourage Americans to ‘back the attack’ and buy war bonds. Met by a cheering crowd of 15,000 when he returned to his home town, appearing in cinema newsreels alongside celebrities and travelling the country making speeches, many soldiers could have been happy to enjoy their well-earned new fame and fortune. But in the words of Richard Greer, who had also been in the 7th Marines alongside Basilone: “He was a Marine, not a salesman.”

Though the military top brass wanted to keep him Stateside, Basilone turned down commission after commission, trying to convince them to return him to the Pacific. Eventually, they relented, and in December 1943 he was stationed at Camp Pendleton, California, to prepare for war. It was at Pendleton that he met his future wife, Lena Mae Riggi, who was a sergeant in the Marine Corps Women’s Reserve. They married the following July, but still Basilone requested to return to the fight. In February 1945, he saw action again, as a machine gun section leader during the critical invasion of Iwo Jima. This time the situation was reversed to Basilone’s battle on the Lunga Perimeter; Japanese forces were secure in fortified block houses firing at the Marines, who were pinned down on the beaches. Basilone once again showed tremendous courage, creeping up on the blockhouses before attacking them with grenades, single-handedly destroying a garrison. He also helped free a stranded tank trapped on an enemy minefield, but was killed by Japanese mortar shrapnel after guiding the vehicle over the hazardous terrain to safety. For his efforts, Basilone was posthumously awarded the Marine Corps’ second-highest decoration for valour, the Navy Cross.



JOHN BASILONE
SERGEANT, U.S. MARINE CORPS
HERO OF GUADALCANAL

BORN IN BUFFALO, N.Y. NOVEMBER 4, 1918
ENLISTED FROM BUFFALO, N.Y. JULY 11, 1940
AWARDED GOLD MEDAL OF MERIT AND MEDAL OF HONOR
FOR HEROIC ACTION ON OCTOBER 24, 25, 1942
FOR SUPPLYING AMMO FOR MACHINE GUNS
KILLED IN ACTION ON IWO JIMA FEBRUARY 19, 1945



04 Running for ammo

Engaged in a 48-hour fire fight, ammo eventually runs desperately low. Basilone knows there is an ammunition dump just 100 yards away, but it is behind enemy lines. Basilone runs and crawls through the jungle, dodging bullets, and manages to carry six heavy cartridge belts back to his remaining men. He later repeats this act, reaching an ammo dump that is 600 yards away.

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BOURBON

IN THE

WORDS MARC DESANTIS

AMERICAN REVOLUTION

The Seven Years' War left the monarchs of France and Spain thirsting for revenge – their new battlefield was North America

During the Battle of the Chesapeake, Admiral de Grasse's fleet prevented the British fleet from relieving Cornwallis's army, resulting in his ultimate surrender

Below: Both Charles III of Spain and Louis XVI of France backed the American war effort



VENGEANCE

With the outbreak of fighting at Lexington and Concord in 1775, which heralded the start of the American War of Independence, Britain's European rivals saw the chance to gain economically if the 13 rebellious American colonies could be removed from Britain's commercial stranglehold. Many of Europe's key powers hoped to increase their own sales in North America if the colonies became independent and free to trade internationally. For some, more than money was at stake.

Both France and Spain had been big losers in the Seven Years' War (1756-63). Spain had given up both East and West Florida, and while these losses weren't disastrous, Spain's surviving holdings in North America were now under threat. Britain had been the undisputed

victor of that conflict, gaining huge territories, and Florida's Pensacola was an excellent port out of which it could conduct smuggling or mount attacks on Spanish Louisiana. It might have even be used to interdict shipping from Cuba. To compensate Spain for its wartime losses, France had, in 1763, given up Louisiana, including the port of New Orleans. France's loss of its Canadian territories took with it its rich fur trade and also jeopardised its share of the Newfoundland fisheries. All this meant the American colonists, when they revolted against Britain, would find many sympathetic ears among the French and Spanish.

Vengeance was very much on French minds after 1763, and foremost among them was the

“THE AMERICAN COLONISTS, WHEN THEY REVOLTED AGAINST BRITAIN, WOULD FIND MANY SYMPATHETIC EARS AMONG THE FRENCH AND SPANISH”



foreign minister, the Comte de Vergennes. He sought to humble and injure the British in any way he could. "England is the natural enemy of France," he declared, and "is a greedy enemy, ambitious, unjust and treacherous: the unalterable and cherished object of her policy is, if not the destruction of France, at least her degradation and ruin."

In the post-war period, Britain had made serious political missteps of its own. It was ill served by statesmen who disregarded the need to maintain good relations with the rest of Europe. Their haughty attitude did nothing to endear Britain to the other courts of Europe, and the American War of Independence would be fought by Britain on its own, without the benefit of an ally on the continent.

Gunpowder for the rebellion

When the American rebels began casting around for the necessities of war in 1775, especially gunpowder, many European governments, put off by the arrogance of an overwhelmingly successful Britain, looked the other way. No war could be fought at all without gunpowder, but at one stage in August 1775, while besieging Boston, General George Washington received a report on the dire powder situation and was shocked into speechlessness for half an hour.

But the profit motive came to his army's rescue. Merchants in France, the Netherlands

"1 MILLION LIVRES HAD BEEN GIVEN TO THE COMPANY BY KING LOUIS TO BUY MILITARY SUPPLIES FOR THE AMERICANS"

and Spain shipped substantial amounts of munitions to their own colonies in the Caribbean, such as France's Martinique, the Netherlands' St Eustatius and Spain's Santo Domingo, where waiting American merchants could acquire them. A single 100-pound powder barrel from Holland could be sold at four or five times its original cost once it had found its way across the Atlantic.

France was not willing to risk war with Britain by overtly supplying arms and munitions, yet it still wished to keep the American rebellion alive to vex its rival. Pierre de Beaumarchais, a watchmaker and playwright who had written *The Barber Of Seville*, provided the solution to this quandary. He had become close to independence-minded American colonists while in Britain on a minor diplomatic mission and was convinced of the need to supply them with more arms. He wrote to King Louis XVI that aid could be delivered secretly, in such a way that it would not compromise France. The Comte de Vergennes approved his plan, and in the late spring of 1776, Beaumarchais had established the dummy trading firm of Roderigue Hortalez and Company that outwardly took part in American commerce.

In truth, 1 million livres had been given to the company by King Louis to buy supplies for the Americans. Beaumarchais proved extremely energetic in organising the shipment of war supplies to the colonies. "My zeal will better supply my lack of capacity," he had assured the king, "than the ability of another could replace my zeal." Additional money came from Spain, which delivered 1 million livres to Beaumarchais in 1776 to buy armaments for the rebels.

Though Spain was officially neutral in the American dispute, royal policy was to have its governors in the New World arm the rebels with muskets and powder. The energetic playwright also brought on board private investors who contributed funds, and when Roderigue Hortalez 'opened' for business, it was capitalised at more than 3 million livres from all sources.

The Bourbon Compact

Despite his visceral desire to wound Britain, Vergennes was cautious, and advised his king to avoid a more-extensive role until the Americans showed that they had a chance to win. That demonstration came on 17 October 1777, when American forces defeated a British



The scene of the surrender of British General John Burgoyne at Saratoga on 17 October 1777

The Comte de Rochambeau is seen here alongside General Washington at the Siege of Yorktown



ROCHAMBEAU AND THE EXPÉDITION PARTICULIÈRE

IN THE FINAL EFFORT TO DEFEAT THE BRITISH ON THE CONTINENT, FRANCE SENT ITS OWN EXPEDITIONARY ARMY TO FIGHT ALONGSIDE ITS AMERICAN ALLIES

On 11 July 1780, the Comte de Rochambeau and more than 5,000 French soldiers landed on Rhode Island after a ten-week voyage from France. This 'Special Expedition' against the British in North America was intended to aid General George Washington further south. Washington, eager for French support, intended to launch a campaign against New York as soon as Rochambeau landed, however, the French force was suffering from sickness and fatigue after the arduous voyage.

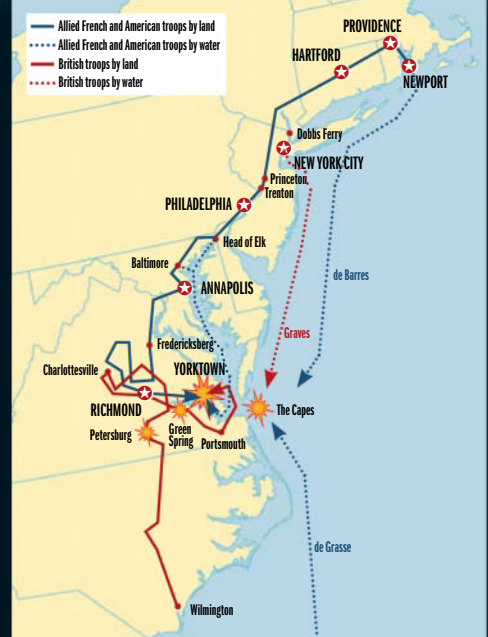
The European army set up camp at Newport,

“DURING SEVERAL MEETINGS BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES, WASHINGTON PRESENTED HIS URGENT WISH TO TAKE BACK NEW YORK CITY, WHICH HE HAD LOST TO THE BRITISH IN 1776”

on Rhode Island, which Rochambeau made his base. He travelled out to meet with Washington on 21 September, and realised with some despair just how ill equipped and small in number the Continental Army was. He quickly sent his son back to France to petition King Louis for more men and funds – he would not return until the following spring, with only the desperately needed money and no extra troops.

In the summer of 1781, the French expedition marched south and met with the Continental Army at White Plains in New York state. During several meetings between the two sides, Washington presented his urgent wish to take back New York City, which he had lost to the British in 1776. However, Rochambeau managed to persuade the general to march into Virginia, where their combined force could meet up with Admiral de Grasse's fleet. On 18 August 1781, the combined armies headed south in separate columns, in order to increase the pace of the march. By the start of October, the Siege of Yorktown was well underway, which would prove to be the end of the final significant British presence in the colonies.

ROUTES OF WASHINGTON & ROCHAMBEAU 1781



invading army at Saratoga, New York. This victory hardly destroyed British power in North America, but it did make the American cause seem altogether more viable to the French. The American bid for an official alliance with France, achieved in 1778, is justly famous for bringing to the revolutionary cause France's considerable wealth and military power. Without France, American independence would never have been won. But French power was itself not enough to guarantee British defeat – it would need Spanish help.

France and Spain had once been bitter rivals, back in the 17th century when Bourbon France and Habsburg Spain had fought for dominance in Europe. But this changed when Philip of the House of Bourbon ascended to the Spanish throne in 1700, leading to a recurring alliance between the two branches of the family, which became known as the Bourbon Compact.

The aggregate power of France and Spain was thereby a real challenge to Britain, especially at sea where the British maintained Europe's most powerful navy. But the combined

fleets of France and Spain exceeded the Royal Navy in ships of the line, the most important class of warship.

The existence of the Bourbon Compact did not mean that Spain, under its reform-minded and cautious King Carlos III, would meekly follow France's lead or that Spanish entry into the war was automatic.

After the French and Americans had made their alliance, Spain offered to mediate between Britain and France. To Britain, it offered to remain neutral in exchange for the return of Gibraltar, the strategic speck of land at the mouth of the Mediterranean that had been lost in 1713 – but Spain's price was too high. Spain also had its own territorial interests and wanted something from France in return for its support against Britain. France would have to help it attain its goals and also commit to a joint invasion of Britain (no small undertaking) before Spain's sprawling colonial empire fell victim to British counterattacks.

These demands were difficult for the French to accept, but Spanish aid was absolutely

required. Now that the war had been going on for several years, the Royal Navy quickly increased its total number of ships of the line at sea and had pulled far ahead of the French fleet. Without the addition of Spanish ships to its numbers, the French would have found themselves severely outnumbered. If the French fleet on its own had been defeated, the Royal Navy would have been free to strangle the American colonies with a tight blockade. France and Spain agreed to an alliance in April 1779, though Spain itself did not ever become the direct ally of the American colonies.

The Franco-Spanish alliance moved quickly to put pressure on the British. In July 1779, a combined French and Spanish invasion fleet departed from northern Spain for Britain and was anchored in the Channel by August. But the allied fleet lost contact with the British fleet and valuable time was wasted before it was found again. In the meantime, the British ships had sped back to the Channel. The delay proved costly. Preparations for the attack had been rushed, disease was ravaging the Spanish

THE GREAT SIEGE OF GIBRALTAR

ONE OF THE LARGEST CLASHES IN THE REVOLUTION DIDN'T EVEN TAKE PLACE IN NORTH AMERICA

On 21 June 1779, Spanish forces attacked the unprepared garrison of Gibraltar in south Spain. This small rock, with a force of between 5,000 and 7,000 men, was a key British naval base in the region, and its loss would have meant a weakening of the Royal Navy's dominance at sea. In accordance with the Treaty of Aranjuez signed in April that year, which declared a mutual support between France and Spain against the British, the French fleet joined with the Spanish in order to blockade Gibraltar.

As Bernardo de Gálvez campaigned in North America to retake former Spanish territory, and Rochambeau's men made their way south

to join with Washington and eventually begin the Yorktown campaign, the Siege of Gibraltar dragged on. In the spring of 1780, the British navy broke through the French and Spanish blockade, bringing with it vital supplies and more than 1,000 reinforcements. However, the siege soon began again in earnest and the garrison once again found itself desperately short of supplies. Nonetheless, with an abundance of gunpowder and gun batteries peering from within the hollowed-out cliff face of the rock, the defenders were able to deal out devastating fire on the enemy. Red-hot shot was loaded to set ships ablaze, while special depressing gun carriages were also used, so the

cannons could be fired straight down upon the assaulting troops below.

In 1782 a Grand Assault on the rock was planned, with a united French and Spanish army supported by the Combined Fleet. Thwarted by a sortie by the British defenders, under the command of Gibraltar's Governor George Elliott, the great attack was a failure. By 1783, some three years after it was first attacked, the siege was lifted and the French and Spanish armies retreated. Though this action ended in failure for the allies, it managed to open up yet another front to distract British resources, in particular its navy, from the American theatre.

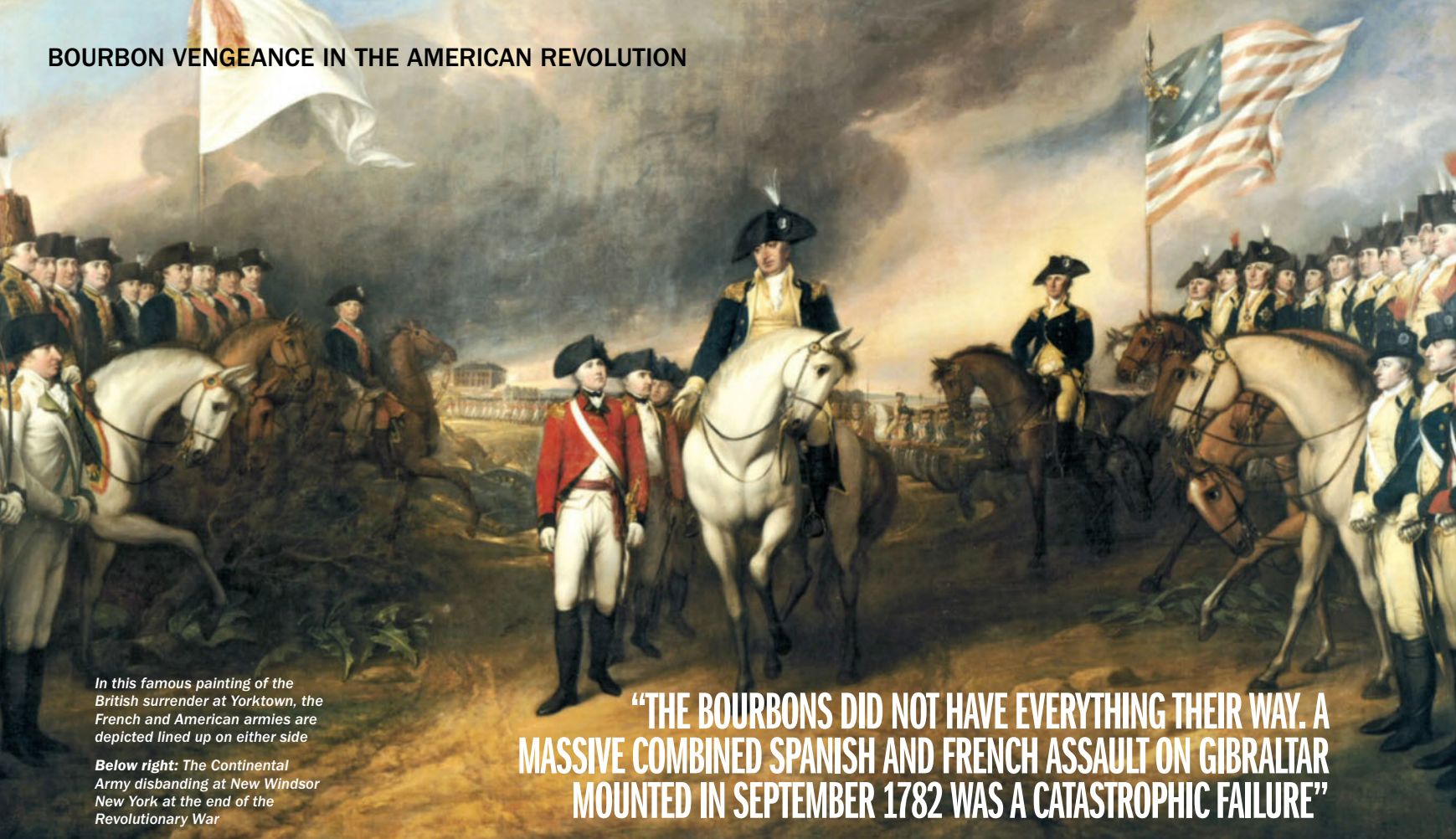


Here, the Grand Assault of Gibraltar is depicted, with the British Governor George Elliott pointing to the rescue of stricken Spanish sailors

“DESPITE HIS VISCERAL DESIRE TO WOUND BRITAIN, VERGENNES WAS CAUTIOUS, AND ADVISED HIS KING TO AVOID A MORE EXTENSIVE ROLE UNTIL THE AMERICANS SHOWED THAT THEY HAD A CHANCE TO WIN”



American troops fighting during the Battle of Long Island in 1776



In this famous painting of the British surrender at Yorktown, the French and American armies are depicted lined up on either side

Below right: The Continental Army disbanding at New Windsor New York at the end of the Revolutionary War

“THE BOURBONS DID NOT HAVE EVERYTHING THEIR WAY. A MASSIVE COMBINED SPANISH AND FRENCH ASSAULT ON GIBRALTAR MOUNTED IN SEPTEMBER 1782 WAS A CATASTROPHIC FAILURE”

crews, and the allied ships already needed to be resupplied with food. The French and Spanish postponed their invasion, and their ships returned to port.

With the invasion plan scuttled, Spain turned its attention to Gibraltar. The siege began in June 1779, when all communications were cut between the Spanish and British garrisons. Britain had been taken by surprise by the Spanish move and had failed to provision its relatively small garrison. Easy resupply by sea was made impossible by patrolling Spanish warships and a Royal Navy relief mission under Admiral Sir George Rodney had to fight its way through fierce Spanish opposition to reach the rock in early 1780.

Spain used Britain's preoccupation with holding Gibraltar to strike elsewhere. In August 1781, a fleet was sent to capture Menorca, which fell when the British garrison capitulated in February 1782. British warships could not be everywhere at once, and while a second British relief fleet was on its way to Gibraltar, the French captured a British merchant convoy of 22 ships carrying cargoes worth almost £5 million. However, the Bourbons did not have everything their way. A massive combined Spanish and French assault on Gibraltar mounted in September 1782 was a catastrophic failure. Gibraltar would in fact never fall, but in the meantime its defence made Britain vulnerable elsewhere. The direct threat posed by the French and Spanish navies to Britain required it to keep a powerful fleet in its home waters – warships that were not available for use against the American colonies.

The war in the west

After Spain's entry into the war, Britain's strategy was to attack its North American



territories in a pincer movement, with one force moving south from Detroit to seize St Louis, and another to move north up the Mississippi River. This would cut off the American colonists from the rest of the continent and from the Spanish in the west.

Fortunately for Spain, its commander in Louisiana, Bernardo de Gálvez, was ready to thwart the British plan. Departing from New Orleans in August 1779, de Gálvez conducted a rapid march upriver, seizing Fort Bute, Baton Rouge, and Natchez.

In March 1780, he took Mobile, and his forces prevented the British from capturing St Louis that May. In February 1781, the Spanish captured Fort St Joseph in Michigan, and in May took Pensacola, along with more than 1,100 prisoners. These attacks had the benefit of draining British manpower and preventing it from being used to reinforce Cornwallis's depleted army in the southern colonies.

De Gálvez performed another major service to the allied cause. When in June 1781 it had become known that Cornwallis had occupied Yorktown in Virginia, it was apparent to both de Gálvez and Admiral François-Joseph de Grasse that they had an evanescent chance to trap Cornwallis's army while the bulk of the Royal Navy was concentrated elsewhere.

De Gálvez released the French fleet from its obligation to help him capture Jamaica – these ships were now free to play a decisive role in the final campaign of the war. Spain rendered a further signal assistance to Admiral de Grasse's naval endeavour in the form of money, which was in desperately short supply. Through an emergency appeal to the residents of Havana, Cuba, 500,000 pesos were raised in just one day to help fund the fleet's expedition to Virginia.

Back in Europe, in August and September 1781, a Franco-Spanish fleet of 66 ships of

the line again massed off Britain, and the need to safeguard the home islands made it impossible for the Royal Navy to spare any ships to go to the aid of Cornwallis, who was now besieged by Washington at Yorktown. At the same time, the French fleet under Admiral de Grasse arrived in the Chesapeake Bay with troops to join Washington's army, effectively bottling up Cornwallis and preventing his much-needed reinforcement.

Then, on 5 September 1781, a British fleet of 19 ships under Admiral Thomas Graves arrived in Chesapeake Bay. After a tough battle with de Grasse's 24 ships, each side retired to lick its wounds. Though both fleets had been hurt in the battle, the British were left worse off and withdrew to New York for repairs. This left Cornwallis without any hope of rescue, and he surrendered to Washington that October. The American Revolution was effectively over and a new country was born.

THE BATTLE OF THE SAINTES

ONE OF THE FINAL ENGAGEMENTS OF THE WAR SAW THE FRENCH FLEET HUMBLLED, WHILE THE BRITISH PREVENTED A TOTAL DISASTER FOR AMBITIONS IN THE CARIBBEAN

After the surrender at Yorktown, British presence on the continent was all but extinguished. All that remained was for the French and Spanish to exact as much vengeance as possible on their old enemy and cripple British power in the New World. The Caribbean islands were important to both sides, with their rich sugar crops bringing in valuable trade and their strategically vital ports controlling sea traffic in the region.

After supporting the Yorktown campaign, and fending off the Royal Navy at the Battle of Chesapeake, Admiral de Grasse turned his

attention to Britain's other power bases across the ocean. As Britain's most profitable and strategically vital island in the Caribbean, Jamaica became the next target of the French fleet. On 8 April 1782, de Grasse set sail with 35 ships of the line and 150 unarmed vessels to seize the island.

Rear Admiral Sir Samuel Hood pursued and caught the French fleet off the coast of Dominica on 9 April, forcing de Grasse to organise a hasty rearguard while his convoy escaped. During the brief engagements between the two fleets, a single French ship of the line was forced to retreat

to make repairs, while the full complement of Hood's vessels continued the pursuit.

On 12 April, the two forces lined up for battle, de Grasse by now with only 30 ships to face Admiral George Rodney's 36 – Rodney had recently taken over from his subordinate. After a sudden change in the wind, the French formation was sent into disarray and the British sailed into the gaps that emerged, raking their enemy with fire from both sides. The French fleet fled and the flagship *Ville de Paris* was captured along with Admiral de Grasse – the first time a French commander-in-chief had been captured at sea. The man who had been so instrumental in the Yorktown campaign was now a prisoner of war, but more importantly for the British, the empire's islands in the West Indies were secure.

The Battle of the Saintes saw Admiral de Grasse captured by the British

“ALL THAT REMAINED WAS FOR THE FRENCH AND SPANISH TO EXACT AS MUCH VENGEANCE AS POSSIBLE ON THEIR OLD ENEMY AND CRIPPLE BRITISH POWER IN THE NEW WORLD”



REVENGE OF THE RED ARMY

WORDS WILL LAWRENCE

After suffering the horror of Germany's 1941 invasion of the Motherland, the Red Army retaliated with ferocious violence

In 1941, as the Wehrmacht swept into the Soviet Union, the Reich Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, described the Red Army as a house of cards. In January 1945, the German general Guderian applied the same metaphor to his own nation's position on the Eastern Front. "If the front is broken through at any one point," he noted, "all the rest will collapse." And collapse it did.

According to one noted historian, the Red Army had close to 7 million men arranged along that front, which stretched all the way from the Adriatic Sea to the Baltic. This was more than double that of the Wehrmacht forces that had launched Hitler's ill-fated Operation Barbarossa, his invasion of the Soviet Union, in the summer of 1941.

The German armies fighting on the Eastern Front were often battle-hardened and well-drilled troops, but the quality of Red Army soldiery and munitions improved as the war dragged on, with the Soviets demonstrating startling recuperative powers. In truth, it was the Red Army – more so than the Allied troops

invading western Europe on D-Day – that burst the floodgates, swamping German resistance and sweeping away the flailing National Socialist regime. They did so amid a torrent of blood and vengeful brutality.

The turning point was Stalingrad in early 1943. The Wehrmacht's largest single fighting force, the mighty Sixth Army, was destroyed within the ruins of the battle-torn city and upon the icy steppe outside. From the moment the Sixth was encircled, the Wehrmacht's posture in the east became near exclusively defensive.

German attacks and counter-attacks continued as the Soviets failed at first to drive home their advantage, and the highly competent German generals Manstein and Guderian helped stem the damage to the Wehrmacht's position. However, Hitler's chronic underestimation of the Red Army's restorative powers, and of his own army's ability to function effectively when distance, manpower and logistics were hopelessly stretched, proved to be disastrous.

"THE TURNING POINT WAS STALINGRAD IN EARLY 1943. THE WEHRMACHT'S LARGEST SINGLE FIGHTING FORCE, THE MIGHTY SIXTH ARMY, WAS DESTROYED WITHIN THE RUINS OF THE BATTLE-TORN CITY AND UPON THE ICY STEPPE OUTSIDE"

*A memorial to the
victorious Red Army
in Riga, Latvia*



REVENGE OF THE RED ARMY

Soviet propaganda from the time urged the Red Army to 'beat the German beasts'



Soviet soldiers on the offensive near Leningrad



Defeat at Kursk in 1943, where Germany's Operation Citadel foundered amid the twisted wreckage of a vast and calamitous tank battle, was yet another nail in the Wehrmacht's coffin. Kursk still stands as the largest single tank battle ever fought, while Citadel represented Germany's final strategic offensive on the Eastern Front. Defeat handed the Red Army the initiative for the rest of the war.

Stalin drove home that initiative during 1944, when he reorganised his position along the Eastern Front, nominating new generals for frontline command while appointing senior commanders Aleksandr Vasilevsky and Georgy Zhukov to supervisory roles, overseeing Red Army operations. Unlike Hitler, who was beset by a persistent paranoia, Stalin trusted his army commanders and heeded their input.

While Kursk had taken its toll on the Red Army, and material as well as human losses continued to run high – the noted historian John Keegan reports Soviet expenditure of 42 million rounds of artillery ammunition across the July and August of 1943 – its military strength and efficacy continued to expand.

Soviet success was boosted by the efficacy of the T-34 battle tank, its mass production (one historian places production figures between 1941-45 at almost 65,000) allowing the Red Army to cannibalise its own machines when spare parts were required. For all its technical excellence, the diversity of equipment produced by German factories often meant that machinery had to be abandoned or destroyed once it broke down, as the necessary spares were not readily available.

In addition, from the autumn of 1943 onwards, the United States furnished the Red Army with valuable supplies, not least 'soft' goods, from sheet steel to shoe leather. The Soviets preferred their own weaponry, which was invariably of better quality than what they were offered by the Americans, but they welcomed the supply of trucks, especially the half-track. These gave the Red Army, which had been almost Medieval in its ability to execute mass movement, a huge boost.

By the time the Soviet Union launched its offensives in 1944, its forces were formidable. The year opened with two decisive blows, first with the offensive at Leningrad, which ran through January until March. This left the German siege of the city broken and its 16th and 18th Armies defeated.

January also heralded the start of the Ukraine offensive, which, when it halted, saw the Red Army in control of almost the entire country. Its forces now threatened the borders of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania. In April-May, Soviet forces invaded the Crimea.

By the middle of the year, Soviet offensives had ripped through five German armies – the Sixth, Eighth, 16th, 17th and 18th had all been battered into near or total obliteration. According to a report on the later Operation Bagration published by Lieutenant Colonel William M Connor, German personnel casualties at this stage may have amounted to as many as 1 million along the southern section of the Eastern Front alone.

"German equipment losses claimed by the Soviets for the first half of 1944," he wrote, "amounted to 8,100 guns, 3,500 mortars,

THE ASHES OF STALINGRAD

THE DESTRUCTION OF GERMANY'S LARGEST SINGLE FIGHTING FORCE MARKED THE TURNING OF THE TIDE ON THE EASTERN FRONT

The scale of the impending disaster in the Soviet Union became apparent in mid-to-late November 1942, when the mighty German Sixth Army, numbering some 250,000 men and about 100 tanks, was encircled at Stalingrad. In his eagerness to take the city, Hitler had economised elsewhere and the forces protecting the Sixth out on the steppes and along the rivers and tributaries were made up from satellite states. The Russians targeted and defeated these troops in a furious counterstroke, leaving the cream of the German military marooned in an island of ruins.

Hitler swore that relief would be imminent and Göring said (quite falsely) that the Luftwaffe could deliver up to 500 metric tons of supplies to the troops daily. Even in later November, Hitler was confident about the fate of the Sixth Army and did nothing to relieve his men. "Thus were the first nails of procrastination and self-delusion driven into what was soon to become the coffin of the Sixth Army," wrote one commentator.

Such was the army's stoicism that in January 1943, with precious few supplies having made it through and the Sixth having eaten the majority of their horses, many ordinary troops still believed that the SS Panzer Corps would turn the tables on their Bolshevik foe.

The entombment of the Sixth, however, was ensured by the time the Soviets initiated Operation Koltso (Ring). It began on Sunday 10 January with 7,000 field guns, rocket launchers and mortars raining down a hellish fire on German positions for almost an hour. It was the largest concentration of artillery in history, according to historian John

Keegan. The final stage of the Stalingrad horror show was now in motion.

By 24 January, the Sixth had been split in two and Hitler ordered a fight to the death. The army's commander, General Paulus, was promoted to Field Marshal, as no officer of that rank had ever surrendered. Paulus would be the first, capitulating on 30 January when the Red Army overran his HQ. Some pockets of resistance fought on until 2 February, but then they too surrendered.

The final battle for control of Stalingrad saw 100,000 German soldiers die between 10 December and their final defeat, while "few of the 110,000 captured survived transport and imprisonment." Hitler responded by ceasing all broadcasts on German radio, playing classical music instead in solemn tribute. In Moscow, the bells of the Kremlin pierced the cold, grey sky. The USSR had won its first great victory of World War II.

"THE RUSSIANS TARGETED AND DEFEATED THESE TROOPS IN A FURIOUS COUNTERSTROKE, LEAVING THE CREAM OF THE GERMAN MILITARY MAROONED IN AN ISLAND OF RUINS"

Field Marshal Paulus prepares the Sixth Army's formal surrender at Stalingrad in January 1943



As the German Sixth Army surrendered, USSR flag was raised over Stalingrad



THE ADVANCE

THE DNIEPER OFFENSIVE AUGUST – DECEMBER 1943

In the aftermath of the great victory at Kursk, the Red Army launched its drive to the Dnieper in August 1943. Stalin hurled his armies along a broad front totalling some 850 miles as he sought control of the pivotal industrial regions of the Donbas and the breadbasket of east Ukraine. The historian John Erickson numbers the Soviet armies engaged in this assault at more than 2.5 million soldiers, organised in five fronts, with 2,400 tanks and assault guns. The outnumbered Germans still had 1 million men to resist the onslaught, though they were eventually forced back across the Dnieper's western shore.

LENINGRAD-NOVGOROD OFFENSIVE JANUARY – MARCH 1944

Launched by the Red Army in January 1944, the Leningrad-Novgorod Offensive opened with a strike against German Army Group North by the Soviet Volkov and Leningrad Fronts, along with part of the Second Baltic Front, all of which came under the command of General Popov. The aim was to lift the German Siege of Leningrad and position the Red Army for an offensive against the Baltic states. By 26 January, the city was free, the Soviets having cleared the Moscow-Leningrad railway. German bastions then toppled day by day as the Wehrmacht forces were pushed back to the River Narva.

DNIEPER-CARPATHIAN OFFENSIVE DECEMBER 1943 – APRIL 1944

On Christmas Eve 1943, the Red Army initiated offensive operations designed to clear German forces from the rest of Ukraine and also to free the Crimea. A massed artillery barrage launched from an area south-east of Kiev announced the assault, as the Soviets sought to batter a route for General Vatutin's First Ukrainian Front. Dubbed by Stalin as the 'Liberation of the Right-Bank Ukraine', the movement incorporated the Red Army's First, Second, Third and Fourth Ukrainian Fronts, as well the First and Second Belorussian Fronts.

OPERATION BAGRATION JUNE – AUGUST 1944

Stalin's huge push against Army Group Centre inflicted extremely heavy casualties on the Wehrmacht and ranks as one of Germany's heaviest reverses of World War II. After the destruction of Army Group Centre's Fourth Army, Third Panzer Army and Ninth Army, the Soviet forces reached the strategically important Vistula River, and Warsaw lay threatened. The havoc rained on Army Group Centre saw East Prussia exposed, with the inhabitants of the Reich for the first time lying at the mercy of the Red Army. A vast amount of Soviet territory was also liberated from German occupation.

BALTIC OFFENSIVE SEPTEMBER – NOVEMBER 1944

On 14 September, the Soviets committed three Fronts to the destruction of Germany's Army Group North in the Baltic states. Almost 1 million Red Army soldiers were deployed along a 300-plus mile stretch, though they found it tough going. Army Group North contained many of Germany's most battle-hardened Eastern divisions, who regularly counterattacked across the fens and marshes. The Soviet push resulted in the isolation of 30 German divisions in the Courland pocket between Tukums and Libau. Despite furious fighting, elements of Army Group Courland held out until May 1945.

JASSY-KISHINEV, BUDAPEST AND BELGRADE OFFENSIVES AUGUST – DECEMBER 1944

The Jassy-Kishinev operation saw the Red Army's Second and Third Ukrainian Fronts ordered to destroy Axis forces as they pushed through Romania ahead of the final offensives of that year, in the Carpathians and towards the key cities of Budapest, Bucharest and Belgrade. All of these movements formed the latter part of Stalin's 'Ten Blows', designed to crack German resistance along the Soviets Western Front. By the time the Blows were complete, the German heartland was exposed and the road to Berlin was open.

KEY ENGAGEMENTS

A KURSK: 5 JULY – 23 AUGUST 1943

B BELGOROD-KHARKOV OFFENSIVE: 12-23 AUGUST 1943

C BATTLE OF SMOLENSK: 7 AUGUST – 2 OCTOBER 1943

D BATTLE OF KIEV: 3 NOVEMBER – 22 DECEMBER 1943

E BATTLE OF NARVA: 2 FEBRUARY – 10 AUGUST 1944

F BATTLE OF TANNENBERG LINE: 25 JULY – 10 AUGUST 1944

G COURLAND POCKET POST BALTIC OFFENSIVE: 14 SEPTEMBER – 24 NOVEMBER 1944

H BATTLE OF DEBRECEN: 6-29 OCTOBER 1944

I BATTLE OF BELGRADE: 28 SEPTEMBER – 20 OCTOBER 1944

J BATTLE OF BUDAPEST: 29 DECEMBER 1944 – 13 FEBRUARY 1945

K WARSAW UPRISING (FAILED): 1 AUGUST – 2 OCTOBER 1944





**“THE RED ARMY WAS MASSING ON THE ODER
READY TO BEGIN THE FINAL MARCH TO BERLIN.
THE LAST DAYS OF THE REICH WERE AT HAND”**



To celebrate the success of Operation Bagration, German soldiers are marched through the streets of Moscow on their way to POW camps



REVENGE OF THE RED ARMY

23,500 machine guns, 18,400 rifles, 1,000 tanks and assault guns, 3,300 tractors and prime movers, 61,300 vehicles, 11.7 million projectiles, and 2.3 million mines.”

The Red Army victories piled further pressure on key German allies, Finland and Romania, and when the Soviets launched a fourth major offensive on 10 June 1944, throwing its Leningrad Front against Finland, the latter sued for peace and ended hostilities on 4 September. Meanwhile, the Allied invasion of Europe had begun with D-Day on 6 June, while Rome had fallen two days before.

With Hitler now fighting on a second front in the west, Stalin could turn his attention to Belorussia and the last remaining undefeated German force on the Eastern Front, launching Operation Bagration on 22 June 1944. If successful, Bagration – named after Pyotr Bagration, a Georgian prince who fought for the Russians during the Napoleonic Wars – would lay bare the German heartland in East Prussia and allow Soviet tanks to roll towards Königsberg. The road to Berlin would then be exposed. Stalin's chosen date was significant; it marked the third anniversary of Hitler's attack on the Motherland.

In the days leading up to the operation's commencement, partisan groups launched a series of attacks on the German rear, using more than 40,000 demolition charges as they sought to disrupt the railway lines that supplied Army Group Centre (one of the three army groupings organised by the Wehrmacht at the start of the Barbarossa campaign). A short artillery bombardment opened proceedings at 4am on 22 June before the major offensive developed on the following day.

The Soviet forces assembled for Bagration comprised 166

Soviet marines firing at German positions on the Leningrad Front



“STALIN'S CHOSEN DATE WAS SIGNIFICANT; IT MARKED THE THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF HITLER'S ATTACK ON THE MOTHERLAND”

divisions, of which 124, including six cavalry divisions, featured in the initial assault. In addition, more than 6,000 aircraft organised into five air armies (one supporting each Front except the First Belorussian, where two were allocated), provided valuable support.

The German defensive line was soon penetrated with the Ninth Army the first to suffer a mauling as it sought to hold the southern section of the Army Group's front. The Red Army's First and Second Belorussian Fronts inflicted heavy losses and by the time Hitler granted the Ninth Army permission to withdraw to Minsk on 26 June, it was too late. The Fourth Army was granted permission from Berlin to withdraw on the same date but was soon entirely trapped by the First and Third Belorussian Fronts and suffered huge casualties. The remaining German army in the region, the Third Panzer, also experienced catastrophic losses.

One week after Bagration's commencement, its first phase had shattered German resistance. The three German armies had lost 130,000 men killed and more than 60,000 as prisoners of war, along with 900 tanks destroyed or put out of action. This was a crippling blow to Army Group Centre and a vast gap was opening on Germany's Eastern Front.

Hitler, who also had to contend with the Allies gaining a foothold in France, tried to change the fortunes of Army Group Centre with the appointment of Field Marshal Model, but even this innovative commander, ‘the Führer's Fireman’, could not douse the flames engulfing the Fourth Army. Minsk fell to the Soviets on 3 July and about 40,000 of the Fourth's soldiers died as they sought to break out of Soviet encirclement. Their official surrender came on 8 July.

Acknowledging the gravity of the situation, Hitler moved his HQ into East Prussia on 9 July, and it was here, 11 days later, that an abortive

General Georgy Zhukov is considered by many historians as the most tactically gifted commander of World War II



ZHUKOV AND THE ROAD TO BERLIN

METICULOUSNESS, MILITARY WISDOM AND UNWAVERING RUTHLESSNESS COMBINED TO MAKE GEORGY ZHUKOV THE MOST BRILLIANT GENERAL OF WORLD WAR II

“Where there is Zhukov, there is victory,” said the Red Army maxim, and certainly, this shoemaker's son from a small Russian village south of Moscow did much to earn that shining reputation.

His father had fought for the tsar as a cavalryman in World War I and Zhukov himself rose to military prominence in the 1939 Mongolian conflict between Japan and Russia. He graduated to the Soviet high command during the early months of the German invasion and then won his laurels at the battles of Leningrad and Moscow.

His undoubted ruthless streak did much to earn the respect of his tyrannical leader, Stalin, and he famously positioned tanks behind Soviet forward positions – not to mow down Germans, but to slaughter any Soviets who fled the battlefield. For all his ferocity, however, he is said to have inspired enthusiasm among his troops.

His work on the logistics of command improved the Soviet army's speed of response, and after helping decide the outcome of the decisive battle at Kursk in the summer of 1943, he spearheaded the advance from the Vistula River in Poland, which culminated in the fall of Berlin. His skill prompted the renowned journalist and World War II historian Max Hastings to describe him as “the most effective military commander of the Second World War.”

WOMEN AT WAR

SOVIET WOMEN PLAYED AN EXTRAORDINARY ROLE IN WORLD WAR II, WITH THOUSANDS FIGHTING ON THE FRONT LINE

While in the West women served as auxiliaries in the army and air force, in the Soviet Union many women fought at the sharp end of the ground war, or took direct roles in aerial combat. According to one estimate, up to 800,000 women

served in the Red Army during World War II. No doubt some were inspired by the 1934 film about the Russian Civil War, *Chapaev*, which told of Anka, a machine gunner, and became a role model for a generation of girls.

Women pilots of the 46th 'Taman' Guards Night Bomber Aviation Regiment, nicknamed 'Night Witches' by the Germans



Above: Russian sharpshooter Lyudmila Pavlichenko, at Sevastopol in 1942. She is said to have scored 300 kills

Certainly, modern historians agree that upwards of 120,000 fought with the Red Army during its offensive into Eastern Europe, many serving in intensely dangerous roles as telephone linesmen, repairing links under fire, or serving on tank crews and as artillery personnel. A great many were employed as marksmen, with the Central Women's School of Sniper Training graduating 1,885 snipers and instructors during the war. Some, such as Ukrainian Lyudmila Pavlichenko with 300 alleged kills, rank among history's deadliest snipers.

In addition, the Soviet government is said to have been the first to allow women pilots to fly combat missions, their 30,000 sorties producing at least 30 Heroes of the Soviet Union. In total, 89 female combatants received the Hero of the Soviet Union award, the nation's highest accolade.

attempt was made upon his life by members of his own military command, which, though rumbled, fanned the flames of paranoia that dogged the latter stages of his life.

Hitler's decision to add his personal touch to proceedings did little to halt the Soviet advance. By 10 July, the Lithuanian capital was in Soviet hands and the Third Belorussian Front had finally set foot on German territory. A week later, Stalin was formally celebrating the success of Operation Bagration by parading German POWs through the streets of Moscow.

The crushing of Army Group Centre reverberated across the Eastern Front, from the Balkans to the Baltic, and left the Red Army poised to launch an attack across the Vistula, the largest river in Poland. When that watery barricade was crossed, the rest of East Prussia would be prone; for the first time, the Reich's very own soil was under threat.

In a remarkable feat, August 1944 saw German munitions output reach its highest point in the entire war with almost 900 tanks produced and nearly 750 heavy guns. Around the same time, the remnants of German manpower were called into action with the lowering of the conscription age. More than 700,000 were recruited in the three months leading up to October 1944.

In truth, the Reich needed every man it could muster, as the Soviet threat to the Fatherland loomed larger with each passing day. In a bid to prevent Germany from organising a defensive front east of the Polish frontier, the Soviet army extended operations both above and below the rupture wrought by Bagration, and

late in August the Soviets launched a massive offensive against Romania. Within hours, the German and Romanian resistance crumbled and, by the last week of August, Romania took itself out of the war – Romania's defection provoked Bulgaria's soon after.

During the autumn of 1944, the Soviets had concentrated pressure upon the Balkans, forming the Fourth Ukrainian Front to mount the invasion of Hungary. By the end of September, the German position in the region was disastrous, and were it not for brief German success in the west where they defeated the Allies at Arnhem, and the merciless crushing of the Warsaw uprising in the east, the war might have ended in 1944. Still, the German position was precarious in the extreme and was further exacerbated when Hitler transferred two precious panzer and panzergrenadier divisions into Hungary in a bid to protect the Lake Balaton oil fields. "A very stupid disposition," said Stalin on hearing of the move.

On New Year's Day 1945, Germany's only major armoured reserve on the whole Eastern Front was deployed in Operation Konrad as Hitler sought to relieve Budapest and, though initially successful, his forces were brought to a halt on 13 January.

Hitler's obsession with the Hungarian oil fields saw him deploy seven of his 18 panzer divisions in this one arena, crucially weakening

the rest of the Eastern Front. According to one prominent historian, despite German production lines' titanic efforts, in January 1945 the Wehrmacht could deploy only 4,800 tanks and 1,500 combat aircraft against the Red Army's 14,000 tanks and 15,000 aircraft. For the Soviets, the war was almost won and the spoils of the Reich's soft centre lay close to hand.

The Soviet assault on the Reich began with a heavy artillery barrage at 4.35am on 12 January, heralding what the late historian and politician Alan Clark would dub 'Black January', such was the terror the Soviet armies wreaked upon the German nation. General Konev's First Ukrainian Front then moved over the western bridgehead across the Vistula about 120 miles south of Warsaw. It has been noted that German forces paid a heavy price for Hitler's insistence that all available armour be placed at the front of his defensive lines, within easy reach of the Soviet shelling. One Tiger unit was obliterated while trying to refuel.

Two days later, Zhukov's First Belorussian Front launched its primary thrust and by nightfall on 15 January, the Red Army's bridgeheads across the Vistula were linking up across a 300-mile front. They drove towards the River Oder. Within a fortnight, the Soviets had left the war-torn Polish countryside and pierced the frontiers of the Reich itself. Indeed,

"IN A REMARKABLE FEAT, AUGUST 1944 SAW GERMAN MUNITIONS OUTPUT REACH ITS HIGHEST POINT IN THE ENTIRE WAR"

here in Silesia and Pomerania they discovered a landscape far richer than many of them had ever known.

This was a land thus far cocooned from the horrors of war, regions where the Reich's minister of armaments and war production, the architect Albert Speer, had set up countless small industries to fuel the German war machine. "Through this peaceful countryside the Soviet columns literally blazed their trail," wrote one historian, as buildings were torched and civilians casually murdered.

The Red Army's behaviour towards civilians was shocking in the extreme, though many observers note that for all their barbarity, the soldiers' behaviour failed to match the horror dished out by the SS in Poland during 1939, or in Belorussia and the Baltic provinces during 1941, where the Totenkopf SS deliberately slaughtered school children and burned hospital patients alive.

"The brutalities of the Russian armies were not so much intended as incidental," wrote one commentator. Though this does not forgive the outrages visited upon German civilians, and the shameful treatment of women in particular, it should be noted that many Soviet soldiers were illiterate peasants who were "indoctrinated to hate their enemies, conditioned by years of privation and danger, traditionally contemptuous of human life and

many of them with fierce personal incentives for taking vengeance on the Germans."

The German provinces that had, in many cases, celebrated the heroism of their own soldiers soon witnessed the terror that accompanies invading armies, prompting a mass migration of panicked refugees who flocked towards Berlin like rag-tag human tracers for the Red Army itself.

Any hope the Wehrmacht had of halting this advance, at least temporarily, appeared to evaporate when Hitler appointed Himmler, a man with no proper combat experience, to command the newly formed Army Group Vistula in late January 1945. Paranoid as ever, Hitler wanted this to be an SS force commanded by a man whose allegiance he could trust. Guderian described the move as "preposterous," and he was right. Himmler had proved himself nothing more than a mass-murderer of civilians and his appointment to such a key combat position at such a pivotal moment was to prove catastrophic to German fortunes.

Had Guderian been appointed and, through his considerable expertise, been able to at least temporarily stall Stalin's advance, it is thought that the Soviets might not have been able to launch another strike until after the Allies had crossed the Rhine. Had this been the case, the outcome for Europe during the 20th century might have been markedly different.

As it was, German resistance, though fierce, was doomed. Breslau, the capital of lower Silesia, fought an epic siege, holding out for 72 days and only capitulating after Hitler's death. By the end of January, the Red Army had seized bridgeheads above and below Breslau.

All the while, as the spear points of the Soviet thrust penetrated deep into enemy territory, Red Army rear-area campaigns were in full swing, as the NKVD, Stalin's secret police, sought to clear conquered areas of hostile elements. The execution of German POWs, meanwhile, was endemic. If civilians were being murdered on the spot, what hope was there for a man in uniform?

None of the German army groups could stem the Soviet tide; the only impediment to the Red Army's advance was its lumbering supply columns. By the beginning of February 1945, as the Allied leaders gathered for the seminal World War II conference at Yalta in the Crimea, the Red Army was massing on the Oder ready to begin the final march to Berlin. The last days of the Reich were at hand. Stalin and the Red Army would savour their imminent victory.

AN ORGY OF VIOLENCE

AFTER SUFFERING THE JACKBOOT OF GERMAN BRUTALITY, THE VICTORIOUS SOVIETS RETALIATED WITH MERCILESS BARBARITY. NO ONE WAS SPARED

As Soviet troops launched into East Prussia in January 1945, their political officers daubed slogans reminding fighters that they were "entering the lair of the fascist beast." Civilians were murdered for their goods and POWs often executed on the spot. Those who suffered most, however, were women.

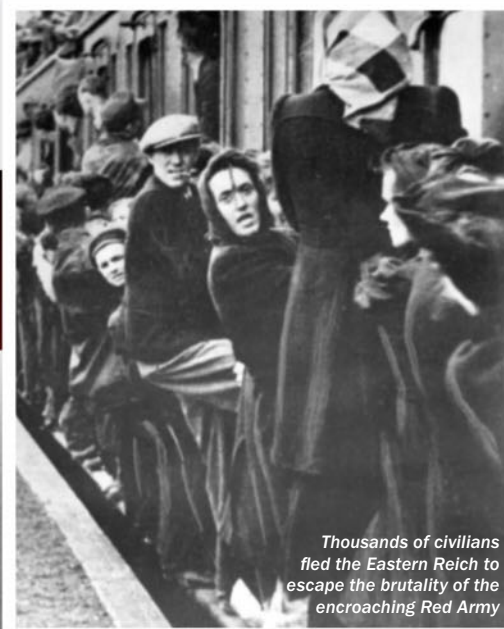
"Red Army soldiers don't believe in individual liaisons with German women," wrote the playwright Zakhar Agranenko in his diary when serving in East Prussia. "Nine, ten, 12 men at a time - they rape them on a collective basis."

As highlighted by the renowned historian Anthony Beevor, the mass rape of women was not limited to Germans; it was extended to Poles, Ukrainians and Belorussians. Even Russian women, forcibly sent back to Germany as slave labour, and those freed from concentration camps, suffered the lusts of the invading armies.

The Soviet march to Berlin is punctuated with frequent atrocity, the rapes starting as soon as the Red Army entered East Prussia and Silesia in 1944. In many towns and villages, every female, aged from 10 to 80, suffered, and female Soviet soldiers often showed little pity for the victims. Some actively encouraged their male comrades.

"The subject has been so repressed in Russia," writes Beevor, "that even today veterans refuse to acknowledge what really happened."

"IN MANY TOWNS AND VILLAGES, EVERY FEMALE, AGED FROM 10 TO 80, SUFFERED, AND FEMALE SOVIET SOLDIERS OFTEN SHOWED LITTLE PITY FOR THE VICTIMS"

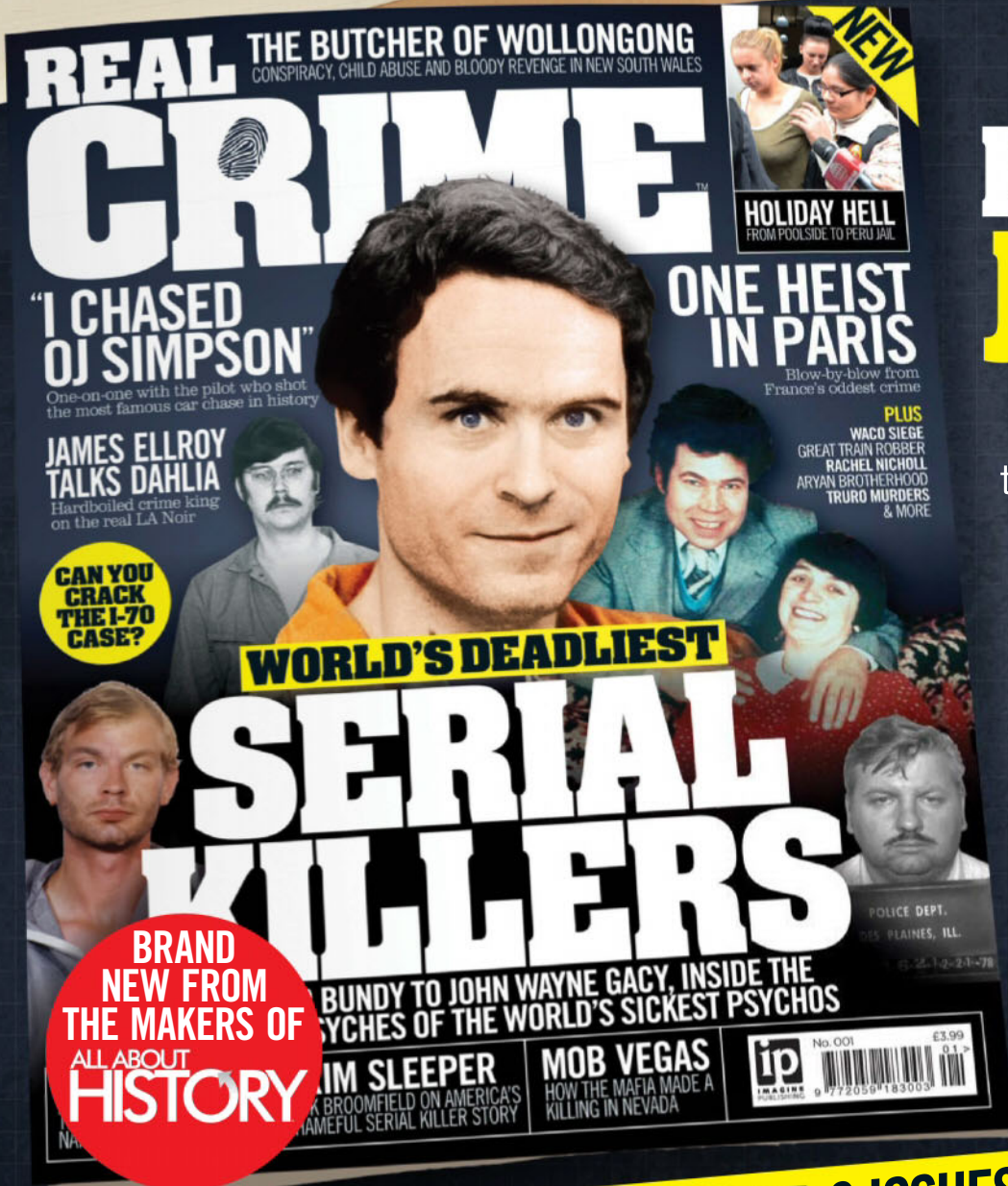


Thousands of civilians fled the Eastern Reich to escape the brutality of the encroaching Red Army



Red Army cavalry pass through a German town

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Chaos in East Timor

One of the world's youngest nations, East Timor's road to independence has been soaked in blood

WORDS TOM FARRELL

Even today, 13 years after formal independence, the Palácio do Governo (Governor's Palace) is the most substantial building in the whole of Timor Leste (East Timor). The capital Dili remains flyblown and impoverished, with much of the local economy propped up by foreign aid.

Foreign occupiers – Portuguese, Indonesian and most recently the United Nations – have come and gone, but the small island remains afflicted by chronic underdevelopment. It is estimated that half the population live below the poverty line, in a country where torrential rains turn rural roads into rivers of mud between December and April; hot air currents follow, and for a few months the landscape is transformed from greens into parched browns and yellows. This poverty endures despite the presence of an estimated 5 billion barrels of oil, together with 50,000 billion cubic feet of natural gas deep beneath the seas to the south of Timor.

Built in 1960, the white-walled and expansive Palácio is the current seat of East Timor's government. It has recently been embroiled in lawsuits filed by the Timorese against Australia's intelligence services at the International Court of Justice, The Hague. The former have alleged that the latter used an aid program as a cover to bug cabinet rooms within the building ahead of negotiations to drill in the Timor Sea.

The Palácio dates from the reign of António de Oliveira Salazar, when ruling Portugal slumbered under a corporatist, semi-fascist regime known as the Estado Novo (New State). A contemporaneous monument rises nearby: to mark the five centuries that had passed since his death in 1460, faraway Lisbon commissioned the building of an obelisk to Prince Henry the Navigator. This said much about the Salazar regime's defiant mentality.

Modern European imperialism had essentially begun with Prince Henry, patron to the Portuguese mariners who opened the sea lanes to the east. But the first global empire had also proven the most tenacious.

By 1960, the other European powers had vacated most of Africa and Asia. The Portuguese, however, were determined not to budge. The New State dispatched vast numbers of troops to Angola and Mozambique, both of which sat atop massive reserves of natural resources. These wars were economically draining, unpopular and played a significant part in the downfall of the New State.

Unsurprisingly, rapid decolonisation was high on the agenda of the Armed Forces Movement, a group of left-leaning military officers opposed to the fascist status quo in Portugal. Their largely bloodless coup on 25 April 1974 was known as the 'Carnation Revolution' for the flowers that the rebel soldiers placed in the muzzles of their rifles. Thousands of civilians welcomed them on Lisbon's streets, and over the next two years, Portugal began the transition to democracy.

Neglected colony

Until then, Portuguese Timor had been almost a stereotype of the far-flung forgotten colony. A cucumber-shaped island just south of the equator, the Portuguese had occupied the eastern half of Timor in the 16th century. The west was incorporated into the Dutch East Indies, and by 1949 had become part of an independent Indonesia.

The Portuguese had come to East Timor seeking sandalwood and slaves, but did little to develop the interior. Instead, they delegated power to *lurai* (chieftains) and Eurasian mestizos who controlled coffee and sandalwood production in the uplands. Even Dili was a modest town by 1974, a stopover

Pro-independence fighters pictured in 1999



FROM CIVIL WAR TO INVASION

1910

A Timorese *lurai* (chieftain) named Dom Boaventura leads a rebellion that is put down by the Portuguese within two years.

1916

A formal border is drawn up in The Hague between Dutch-controlled West Timor and the Portuguese East.

1941

Portuguese Timor is occupied by Australian and Dutch forces. The Japanese invade the following year and 60,000 Timorese are killed in the ensuing guerrilla war.

April 1974

The Armed Forces Movement overthrows the dictatorship in Lisbon, beginning the 'Carnation Revolution'. A rapid decolonisation of Portugal's colonies accompanies political reform.



“Invasion now loomed. Indonesian troops made regular border raids, often with or disguised as UDT troops. Warships prowled close to the coast”



for the occasional hippy backpacking towards Australia. The turquoise waters of the Wetar Strait lapped its quiet waterfront; with each afternoon's siesta, the markets lost their bustle and chatter and shutters closed across tiled villas. Stucco Catholic churches recalled the 19th-century Algarve.

But even here, on the far side of the world, discontent was rumbling. The small Portuguese population included numerous deportados, exiles from Salazar's regime. If Portuguese Timor was to follow the African colonies to independence, however, its fate was entirely dependent on the larger powers that surrounded it.

Undoubtedly, the nascent nation needed the support of nearby Australia. Up to 60,000 Timorese had perished during World War II, helping the Allies stymie the roll of Imperial Japan's armies across the Indonesian archipelago towards Australia.

In 1974, the East Timorese hoped the Australian reforming prime minister Edward Gough Whitlam would champion their cause. Whitlam, after all, had promoted Aboriginal rights, opposition to the Vietnam War and a more independent Australian foreign policy.

But Whitlam flew to Indonesia in September 1974 to meet General Suharto, informing Indonesia's strongman that Canberra favoured the 'integration' of the territory. Ever since independence, Indonesia had made occasional covetous noises about the small half-island on its southern flank. General Suharto had taken power in a 1965 coup and his death squads subsequently massacred more than a million suspected communists across Indonesia. But he was unlikely to pick a fight with Portugal, a key NATO member in Europe.

The Carnation Revolution changed everything. With leftist nationalism sweeping across Portugal's former empire, Indonesia's rulers fell back on Cold War tropes, caricaturing East Timorese independence as part of a 'communist' conspiracy that would create a 'Cuba in the Pacific'.

Suharto's main benefactors were also facing imminent humiliation as their client regimes in South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos tumbled towards communist absorption. East Timor's independence could not have been more poorly timed.

Coup and civil war

As Portuguese withdrawal loomed, two major parties emerged in the territory. The Timorese Democratic Union, known by its Portuguese acronym of UDT, was supported by civil servants and land owners and favoured federation with Portugal until the nation could stand alone. The Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Fretilin) had a more radical outlook. It promised land reform and

“The governments of China and North Vietnam refused to even recognise the new nation, let alone provide advisers or arms”

literacy campaigns in the countryside. The Fretilin membership was young: even its president, Francisco Xavier do Amaral, was just 37. Its politics were radical. “It is clear Fretilin is not a communist party, although it does have a left-wing,” reported the Australian consul based in Dili.

But flying to Indonesia in mid-1975, the UDT leadership was warned by the Indonesian army chief-of-staff that if they did not halt the “communist threat” of their Fretilin rivals, his forces “would feel obliged to intervene.”

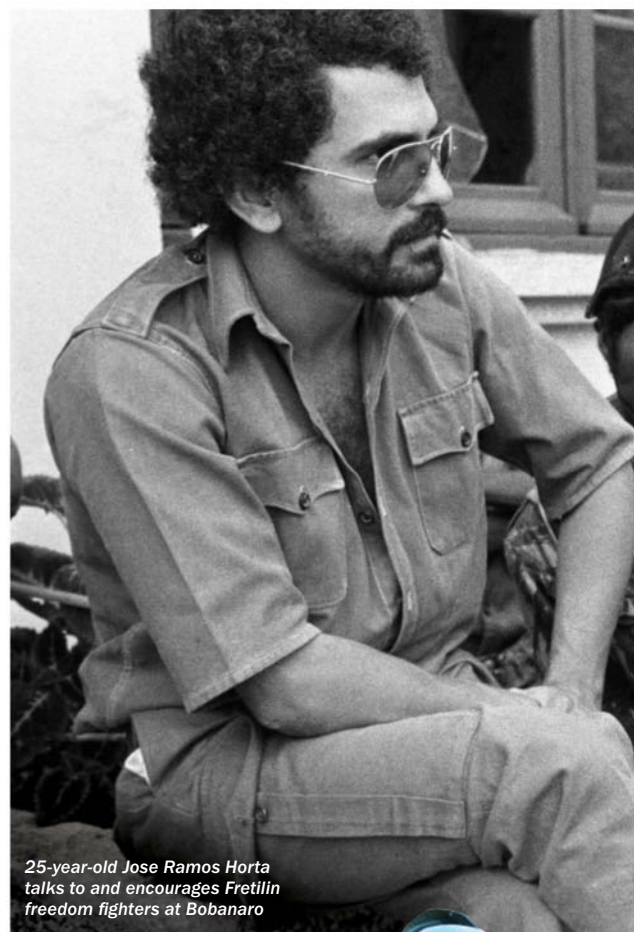
On 11 August 1975, UDT opted for a pre-emptive strike. Its coup, codenamed Operação Sakunar (Operation Scorpion) began with the seizing of Dili's small airport. Portuguese soldiers who were sympathetic to UDT or Fretilin exchanged fire on the streets. In the mountains, rival lurai settled old grudges.

Fretilin formed its military wing, the National Armed Forces of East Timor (Falintil) on 15 August and counter-attacked five days later. The ensuing civil war killed about 1,500 people, but by late September Fretilin controlled most of East Timor, Falintil having driven 800 UDT soldiers and about 10,000 of their supporters into Indonesian West Timor. By then, the Portuguese governor and most foreigners had fled by ship to the island of Atauro, 25 kilometres away.

Invasion now loomed. Indonesian troops made regular border raids, often with or disguised as UDT troops. Warships prowled close to the coast.

On 16 October, five newsmen from Melbourne's Channel 7 and Channel 9 were killed in the border town of Balibo. Canberra effectively turned a blind eye over the next 30 years. In 2007, an Australian coroner ruled that the men had been shot or stabbed by members of Kopassus, Indonesia's special forces group.

No doubt aware of the inevitable, the 50 members of Fretilin's central committee gathered outside the Governor's Palace on 28 November. A starred, red, yellow and black flag rose into the humid sky.



25-year-old Jose Ramos Horta talks to and encourages Fretilin freedom fighters at Bobanaro



In Dili, a UN Officer comforts an injured East Timorese policeman moments after clashes between rebel military faction troops and police

September 1974

Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam meets Indonesian President Suharto in central Java and agrees that Portuguese Timor should 'integrate' with Indonesia.

January 1975

A coalition is formed between UDT and Fretilin, the two largest pro-independence parties. Indonesian intelligence secretly formulates Operasi Komodo (Operation Dragon) to foment civil war as a pretext to invade.

11 August 1975

The UDT launches a coup at Dili's airport. Fretilin expel the group into West Timor after weeks of fighting. The Portuguese governor evacuates to Atauro Island.

16 October 1975

Two Melbourne-based television crews are killed in the border town of Balibo. Indonesia denies its forces are at all responsible.

8 December 1975

Less than a fortnight after Fretilin unilaterally declares independence, Indonesian forces attack Dili. Mass killings immediately take place.



July 1976

President Suharto signs a bill integrating East Timor into Indonesia. First reports emerge of civilians being moved into 'resettlement villages'.



Independent East Timor stood alone. As Fretilin's young Foreign Minister Jose Ramos Horta later pointed out, the governments of China and North Vietnam refused to even recognise the new nation, let alone provide advisers or arms.

But Indonesia's anti-communist rhetoric was good enough to satisfy US President Gerald Ford and his secretary of state, Henry Kissinger. Their visit the following week was later described as 'the big wink'. As Airforce One climbed into the skies over Jakarta and headed back to the US, Indonesian military aircraft descended on Dili.

Brutal occupation

"Indonesian forces have been landed in Dili by sea... they are flying over Dili dropping out paratroopers... a lot of people have been killed indiscriminately... women and children are going to be killed... SOS... we call for your help. This is an urgent call." This broadcast, picked up in Darwin and almost buried in static, was made by Alrico Fernandez, information minister of the newborn republic.

Operasi Seroja (Operation Lotus) began in the early hours of 8 December 1975, followed at 5pm by an aerial attack that dropped paratroopers onto Dili's wharf.

The original plan had been to encircle Dili with troops from border areas. But while the Portuguese may have neglected building roads and schools, they had left behind stocks of NATO-issued weaponry, including G-3 rifles and a few mortars.

Moreover, Fretilin had prepared for the invasion. Civilians had already moved into 'base areas' within Timor's hard-to-reach interior. Its armed wing Falintil knew the territory; the invaders did not. Some paratroopers never made it to earth, picked off by Falintil rifles. Others drowned after falling into the ocean.

Those that did reach Dili showed no mercy. Earlier in 1974, a small pro-Indonesian party named Apodeti had been formed. On the day of would-be 'liberation' of the country, they had arranged a small if enthusiastic march, bearing banners welcoming the Indonesians. They were swiftly gunned down.

The bishop of Dili, Monsignor Costa Lopez, later recalled: "The soldiers who landed started killing everyone they could find. There were many dead bodies in the streets. All we could see were the soldiers killing, killing, killing..."

On 10 December, more troops landed in East Timor's second largest town of Baucau, adding 15,000 troops to the original invasion force. By late 1976, Indonesia would have 40,000 troops in East Timor.

Poor equipment and inadequate intelligence had preceded the invasion. Soldiers attempted to block Falintil by landing behind its positions, only to land on top of them.



In 2009, a Marine shows his Timor Leste Defence Force counterpart how to operate a shoulder-launched multipurpose assault weapon

1978

British Aerospace signs a contract to supply eight Hawk ground-attack aircraft to Indonesia. Fretilin's President Nicolau Lobato is killed at the end of the year.



June 1980

Falintil guerrillas launch a six-hour attack on Dili. Indonesia begins moving migrants from Bali and Java into East Timor.

Mid-1983

A ceasefire with Falintil collapses and Indonesian troops kill at least 80 civilians in the village of Kraras. Hundreds more fleeing to the nearby Be Tuku river are bombed by aircraft.

12 October 1989

The Suharto regime allows Pope John Paul to celebrate Mass outside Dili; 100,000 attend. Pro-independence demonstrators are beaten by the police.

11 December 1989

Australia's Foreign Affairs Minister Gareth Evans and his Indonesian equivalent Ali Alatas sign the Timor Gap Treaty, which allows Australia drilling concessions off the coast.



Apart from the elite units, Indonesian troops did not have the training, commitment and logistical support to capture the Fretilin-controlled interior. They frequently took out their frustrations at the lack of progress on Timorese civilians.

In August 1976, radio signals picked up in Darwin revealed that six villages near the border area of Zumalai were burned down and their inhabitants slaughtered. But from the onset, the invaders had killed with impunity.

Within days of Operasi Seroja, everyone over the age of three was killed in the villages of Remexio and Alieu, south of Dili. The ethnic Chinese populations of Maubara and Licquia were slaughtered in their entirety.

Not that Fretilin was blameless either. During the civil war they had already imprisoned nearly 2,000 UDT and Apoedti supporters. On Christmas Day 1975, 150 of them were shot and buried in a mass grave.

In May 2000, one of the few surviving founders of Fretilin publicly apologised for the massacre. But as Fretilin retreated from Dili into the mountains, thousands of civilians followed in its tracks.

Fence of legs

For the first few years of the occupation, the Indonesian military controlled only a few lowland towns and what passed for a road network – at least by day.

Within the interior, Fretilin ran large 'liberated' areas containing farms, schools and clinics, often using local plants to manufacture medicines. Its Falintil fighters, with 2,500 full-time soldiers, a part-time militia of about 7,000 and nearly 20,000 reservists, could easily hold out here against the Indonesian troops.

The military situation began to turn against Fretilin in 1978. The Suharto regime went on an arms-purchasing spree, sourcing weapons that would be able to extend Indonesian control of its '27th province'.

Particularly effective was the Bronco OV-10 jet, manufactured by the American Rockwell Corporation and supplied with the assent of the Carter administration. The Bronco was ideally suited to the varying climatic conditions of East Timor. By 1978, it was employed in a strategy that involved days of heavy bombing and strafing of Fretilin areas. Large-scale artillery salvos would follow and then ground troops would be unleashed.

Massacres usually followed the capture of Fretilin-controlled territories. Even after civilians were forced down from the mountains, they remained confined to 'resettlement villages', which were essentially concentration camps. Typically, they were located close to roads and guarded by soldiers, day and night. Houses were



In March 1999, civilians are internally displaced by militias secretly backed by the security forces



Soldiers with the Timor Leste Defense Force practice their infantry tactics in 2012

12 November 1991

Western journalists film Indonesian troops firing on a procession at Dili's Santa Cruz cemetery; at least 180 civilians are killed. The Clinton administration suspends military training programs with Indonesia.

November 1992

Falintil's leader Xanana Gusmao is captured in Dili. Convicted of subversion, he spends the next seven years locked up in jail.

1996

Jose Ramos Horta, the exiled Fretilin foreign minister, and Dili's Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo share the Nobel Peace Prize. Upon returning to Dili, Belo survives an assassination attempt.

May 1998

President Suharto resigns after mass protests in the capital and across Indonesia. His successor BJ Habibie instigates reformasi (reform).

30 August 1999

The East Timorese population votes against a special offer of autonomy in a UN-supervised ballot. Anti-independence militias go on the rampage before an Australian-led peacekeeping force secures the territory.



constructed of dried grass and palm leaves with most families not given enough land to grow crops.

Unsurprisingly, by 1979, one Western aid agency described famine conditions as on a par with Biafra (Nigeria) a decade earlier. By that time, with the fall of its base on Mount Matebian, Fretilin's national framework was in ruins, most of its leadership dead or captured.

In the early 1980s, however, the resistance began a revival under a surviving central committee member who would eventually become independent East Timor's first president: Xanana Gusmao.

Under his leadership, Falintil was decentralised into smaller mobile units, carrying out hit-and-run strikes in the lowlands. Reprisals were brutal.

One particularly reviled tactic was called pagar betis (fence of legs). This involved the army corralling up to 80,000 Timorese males at a time and forcing them into human chains. Starting in the border areas, with armed soldiers marching behind them, these huge 'fences' were supposed to flush Falintil guerrillas into the open plains where they would be killed en masse.

Some guerrillas did surrender. Most, however, crouching in the wild grasses and tropical scrub, were able to pick up whispered warnings in their native Tetum dialect from men on the 'fence'. Before it passed, they had escaped. The bored soldiers, plodding behind, were oblivious. The very young and very old usually succumbed to dehydration and exhaustion on these marches.

Fall of Suharto and intervention

If the timing of East Timor's first bid for independence in 1975 had been uniquely bad, its second attempt in 1999 was uniquely fortunate. The year before, Suharto had been swept from power amid mass protests: the Asian financial crisis of 1997-98 had wrecked Indonesian finances already hobbled by decades of corruption and cronyism. A new caretaker administration enacted reformasi (reform), part of which involved rehabilitating Indonesia's international image.

Inevitably, this meant addressing the issue of East Timor, since its 'integration' into

“It is estimated that 183,000 East Timorese died as a result of the occupation”

20 May 2002

East Timor formally becomes independent after a three-year transition period under UN administration. Xanana Gusmao becomes President.

March 2006

Several hundred former soldiers riot over working conditions and pay. Australian and New Zealand troops and peacekeepers return. Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri resigns.

11 February 2008

Renegade soldiers shoot President Jose Ramos Horta, who spends two months in Australia for medical treatment. Their leader Alfredo Renaudo is killed.

2011

East Timor applies for membership of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). It is estimated that the nation has the world's most oil-dependent economy.

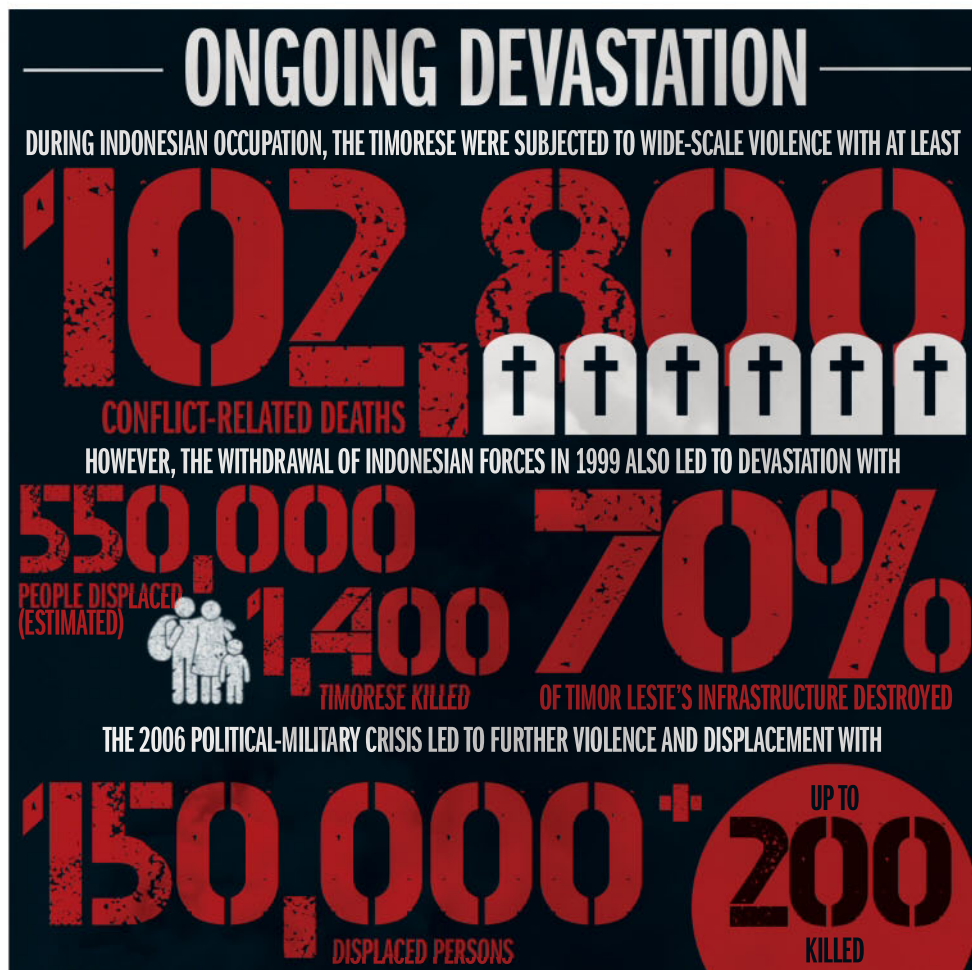
2012

A six-year peacekeeping mission ends. Hundreds of foreign troops leave. Ex-Falintil commander Taur Matan Ruak becomes president.



16 February 2015

The former health minister and Fretilin member Rui Maria de Araújo becomes prime minister, replacing Xanana Gusmao. Relations with Australia become strained over spying allegations.



Indonesia had never been recognised by the United Nations. Yet three years later came the 9/11 attacks in the United States and the subsequent 'Global War on Terror'. These days, Washington views Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, as a key partner in quelling Islamist radicalism in South East Asia.

Had East Timor still been occupied by the 2000s, it is likely that the issue of its self-determination would again have been eclipsed by geo-strategic priorities.

In early 1999, Indonesia announced it was making an 'offer of autonomy' to its 27th province. The ballot would be monitored by the UN, and should the population reject it, Indonesia would withdraw its forces.

White UN Land Rovers filled Dili's streets over the following few months. Falintil withdrew to mountain cantonments as election monitors descended on the territory. On 30 August 1999, the autonomy offer was rejected by 78.5 per cent of the electorate. This result hardly seemed surprising at the time – it is estimated that 183,000 East Timorese died as a result of the occupation.

Troubled independence

More violence followed before formal independence took place on 20 May 2002. As the Indonesian forces gradually withdrew, they continued to back the numerous militias still doggedly opposed to the country's independence.

These groups ran riot after the ballot result was eventually announced. At the behest of the UN Security Council, soldiers once again descended on Dili: this time it was a largely Australian peacekeeping force. More violence followed in mid-2006 when hundreds of ex-soldiers rioted over pay and conditions. This time, peacekeeping troops did not leave until 2012.

The newborn state of Timor Leste, prone to drought and with a historically meagre infrastructure wrecked by one of the most brutal occupations of modern times, now faces a gruelling trek towards prosperity. In the mountains and seas beyond the old Palácio, however, there is a wealth of natural resources ready to be tapped. Perhaps in the future these will prove a blessing for the people of East Timor. In the past, as a magnet for aggressive and greedy foreign powers, they have always been a terrible curse.

SECRET

TUNNEL WARS

OF WWI

WORDS NICK SOLDINGER

Below the killing fields of the Western Front in 1916, a little-known struggle also took place in silence and shadows

On the morning of 1 July 1916, British fighter pilot Cecil Lewis was flying over La Boisselle in the Somme Valley. Below him, the seconds were ticking down to what would become Britain's biggest military catastrophe. By dusk, the fields that he droned over would be choked with more than 58,000 British casualties.

At 7.28am, his plane was flung suddenly sideways. "The whole earth heaved and flashed," he later recalled. "A tremendous column rose into the sky. There was an ear-splitting roar, drowning all the guns. The earth rose 4,000 feet. There it hung like the silhouette of some great cypress tree, then fell away in a widening cone of dust and debris."

What Lewis had just witnessed was, at the time, the loudest human-made blast in history. A 60,000-pound mine below the German line had erupted, heralding the slaughter to come. Within minutes, whistles were blown in the British trenches and, with bayonets fixed, a generation of young men clambered into no-man's land and wandered into oblivion.

The mine came as a surprise to everyone. Everyone, that is, except British high command, the tunnellers who'd worked for months to sneak it under German boots, and tragically, it would transpire, the Germans themselves.



Tunnellers were recruited from collieries all over Britain, as well as from mining companies in Canada, Australia and New Zealand

WHO WERE THE TUNNELLERS?

MANY OF THESE SUBTERRANEAN WARRIORS WEREN'T AS YOUNG AS THE SOLDIERS DYING ABOVE GROUND, BUT VETERANS OF BRITAIN'S GREAT INDUSTRIAL AGE

The men who'd dug their way under the German lines at La Boisselle were rejects. Many had tried enlisting in the army but had been turned down for being too old. These tunnellers, and others like them, were mostly in their 40s, and all highly skilled miners. Many had been as young as 13 when they'd started work and had spent more than 30 years toiling underground. As the trench system on the Western Front locked the fighting into a deadly stalemate, these former has-beens were now recruited en masse to literally undermine the enemy position.

Military mining is as old as siege warfare, but the British Army had no dedicated mining units when war broke out. In fact, it took a civilian entrepreneur to point out the potential for tunnellers to break the deadlock.

Sir John Norton-Griffiths owned a large engineering firm that was busy extending Manchester's sewer system when hostilities began. In his employment were hundreds of 'clay-kickers', skilled labourers whose job it

was to excavate the earthworks. These men, he realised, could be used to tunnel silently and quickly under German trenches to plant explosives. So he wrote to the secretary of state for war, Lord Kitchener, to explain how his

"AS THE TRENCH SYSTEM ON THE WESTERN FRONT LOCKED THE FIGHTING INTO A DEADLY STALEMATE, THESE FORMER HAS-BEENS WERE NOW RECRUITED EN MASSE TO LITERALLY UNDERMINE THE ENEMY POSITION"

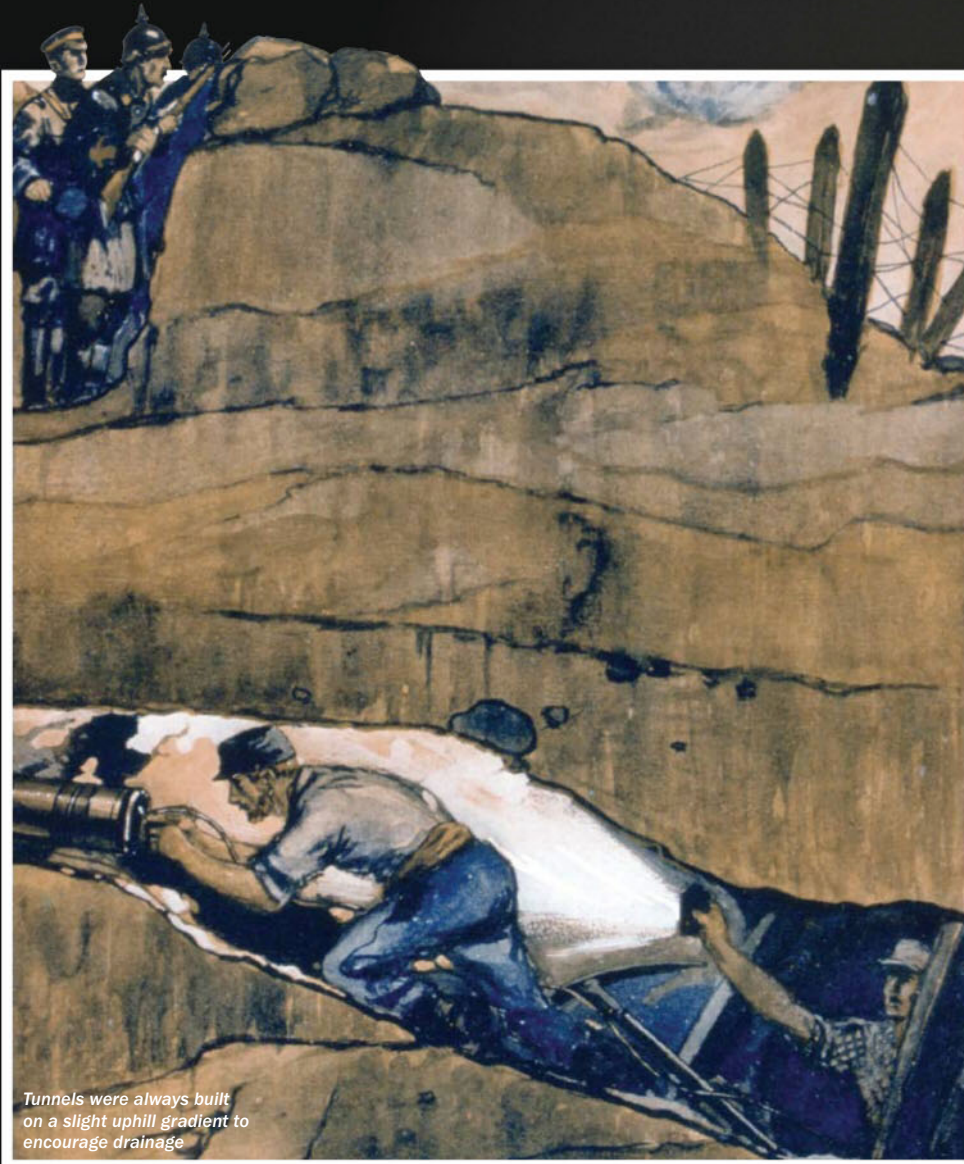
'moles', as he called his men, might break what was fast becoming the biggest siege in history.

Initially, Kitchener showed no interest, but when the Germans did exactly what Norton-Griffiths was proposing and blew up British trenches in Givenchy in December 1914, he summoned the entrepreneur to Whitehall. Norton-Griffiths was then instructed to raise an army of tunnellers. The first men he recruited, naturally enough, were his own moles, and on 18 February 1915, 18 Manchester clay-kickers arrived at Brompton Barracks in Kent, home of the Royal Engineers. Here, they were given medicals, thrust into uniform and, with zero military training, packed off to France. 36 hours later they were under the Givenchy earth, digging defensive tunnels against the Germans. Just days before, the ground above them had been busy with car klaxons, trams and horses' hooves; now it shook from shell fire.

The clay-kickers, however, were only useful in areas where the soil was soft. In places like the Somme Valley where the geology was harder, a different skill set was required. So Norton-Griffiths began looking further than his own workforce. In the collieries across Britain and beyond, he found his army of subterranean soldiers.



French trench diggers, part of the army construction corps called sappers, emerge from one of the tunnels they are digging at the Western Front in July 1916



Tunnels were always built on a slight uphill gradient to encourage drainage

A HERO 80 FEET UNDER

WHEN THE WORLD LITERALLY COLLAPSED AROUND HIM ONE MAN RISKED EVERYTHING TO SAVE THE LIFE OF HIS FELLOW MINER

William Hackett was a typical tunneller. Rejected by the army three times for having a weakened heart, the Nottinghamshire miner was finally accepted into the Royal Engineers in October 1915.

Born in 1873, Hackett had grown up in the slums of Nottingham and, by the time the Great War broke out, had been working down the pits for 23 years.

In June 1916, in Givenchy-lès-la-Bassée, shortly after his 43rd birthday, Hackett and four other men were entombed when an underground blast triggered by Germans digging the other way caused the tunnel they were in to collapse.

Rescuers managed to reach the men and dig all but one of them out. The fifth, however, a 22-year-old from Swansea named Thomas Collins, was injured and unreachable. Although

Hackett could easily have escaped at that time, he refused to leave his young comrade, saying: "I am a tunneller and I must look after the others first."

He stayed underground with Collins while other tunnellers struggled to rescue him, but the blast had rendered the whole tunnel system deeply unstable. Four days into the rescue attempt, it collapsed, and both Collins and Hackett were buried alive.

Hackett was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for his act of selfless bravery – the only tunneller of the war to receive Britain's highest military honour. Speaking years later about her husband's heroism, his widow Alice said: "I could never understand the doctors rejecting him on account of his heart. There wasn't much wrong with that, was there?"

"ALTHOUGH HACKETT COULD EASILY HAVE ESCAPED, HE REFUSED TO LEAVE HIS YOUNG COMRADE, SAYING: I AM A TUNNELLER AND I MUST LOOK AFTER THE OTHERS FIRST"

HELLFIRE JACK

THE BRITISH ARMY'S TUNNELLING OPERATION IN WORLD WAR I WAS DREAMT UP AND DELIVERED LARGELY BY ONE REMARKABLE MAN

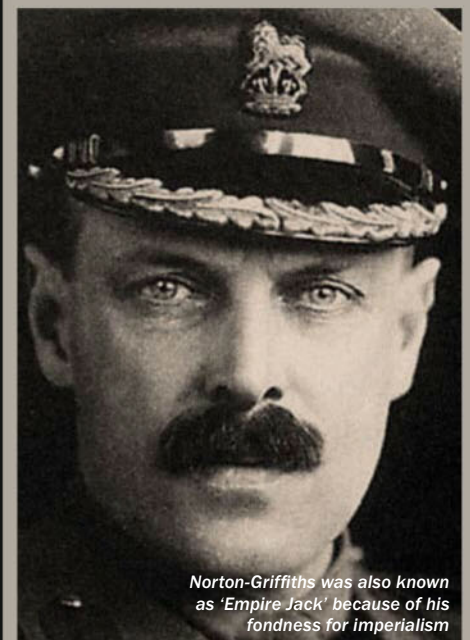
Sir John Norton-Griffiths, the man who inspired the British tunnellers, was an Edwardian celebrity. Born in 1875, this swashbuckling adventurer, whose ferocious temper earned him the nickname Hellfire Jack, started life as the son of a lowly clerk. He ran away from home aged 17, and after a brief stint in the army headed to Africa to work as manager of a gold mine. When the Boer War broke out, he re-enlisted, ending the conflict as a personal bodyguard to the British commander-in-chief.

A series of huge engineering projects then followed, and he returned to Britain a rich man to take up a seat in Parliament.

At the outbreak of World War I, he raised a cavalry regiment at his own expense and had himself commissioned into it as a major, before turning his attention to tunnelling.

Known for touring the battlefields in a wine-laden Rolls-Royce, Norton-Griffiths was as eccentric as he was dynamic. His other significant wartime contribution was almost single-handedly stopping a German advance in 1916 by sabotaging 70 Romanian oil refineries. He ended the war as a lieutenant colonel, and was knighted in 1922. He died in 1930 in Egypt, having either shot himself or been murdered, possibly by Romanians.

"KNOWN FOR TOURING THE BATTLEFIELDS IN A WINE-LADEN ROLLS-ROYCE, NORTON-GRIFFITHS WAS AS ECCENTRIC AS HE WAS DYNAMIC"



Norton-Griffiths was also known as 'Empire Jack' because of his fondness for imperialism

WAR UNDER THE GROUND

THE QUIET AND CAUTIOUS SOLDIERS FACED NO LESS PERIL THAN THOSE UP TOP

The subterranean world carved out by both the British and Germans on the Western Front was an elaborate network of tunnels, galleries and chambers. Here, deep beneath the roar of battle above, men terrified of discovery toiled in total silence, picking

their way centimetre by centimetre towards each other's lines. Working with shovel and bayonet in spaces often as narrow as a man's shoulders, they crawled, dug, scraped and fought their way through the ancient layers of earth.

1 Tunnel entrance

2 Shaft house

In this timber construction, rubble and soil would be hauled from below in sandbags by a winch and pulley, which would then be transported to the surface by a wooden trolley. Everything had to be shifted by hand.

3 Steel shaft

The presence of quicksand in the soil's stratum along some parts of the front meant that only shallow tunnels could be dug. The British solved this problem by using cylindrical steel shafts known as tubbing to help them reach the firmer ground beneath.

4 Timber shaft

Once firmer ground had been reached, timber was used again to complete the mine shaft. In fact, timber was used throughout the mines as a way of shoring up the walls to help prevent them from collapsing in on the tunnellers.

5 Listening post

These were used to detect enemy tunnelling. Early listening equipment such as the Geophone could detect German digging up to 30 metres away. It replaced more primitive techniques like watching for vibration in water standing in a biscuit tin.

6 Mine chamber under construction

7 Tunnelling team

Tunnellers worked in three-man teams that consisted of the clay-kicker or miner who dug the earth, the bagger who filled sandbags with soil and the trammer who transported the bags out of the gallery. Working in silence was essential.

8 Completed deep tunnel

Thanks to the steel tubbing and the superior skills of the British tunnellers, who dug about eight metres per day compared to the Germans' rate of two, some British tunnels were up to 37 metres deep and 658 metres long.

9 Sandbag wall

Known as tamping, these were erected at the entrance

of completed mine chambers. Stuffed full of soil and rock, these hessian sacks were packed tightly together and designed to force the blast vertically, up into the German lines above.

10 Mine chamber

11 German listening post
Among the German equipment used to detect British tunnellers was the Moritz system, which could pick up electrical impulses in the earth. Its presence was to prove crucial to the outcome of the Battle of the Somme.

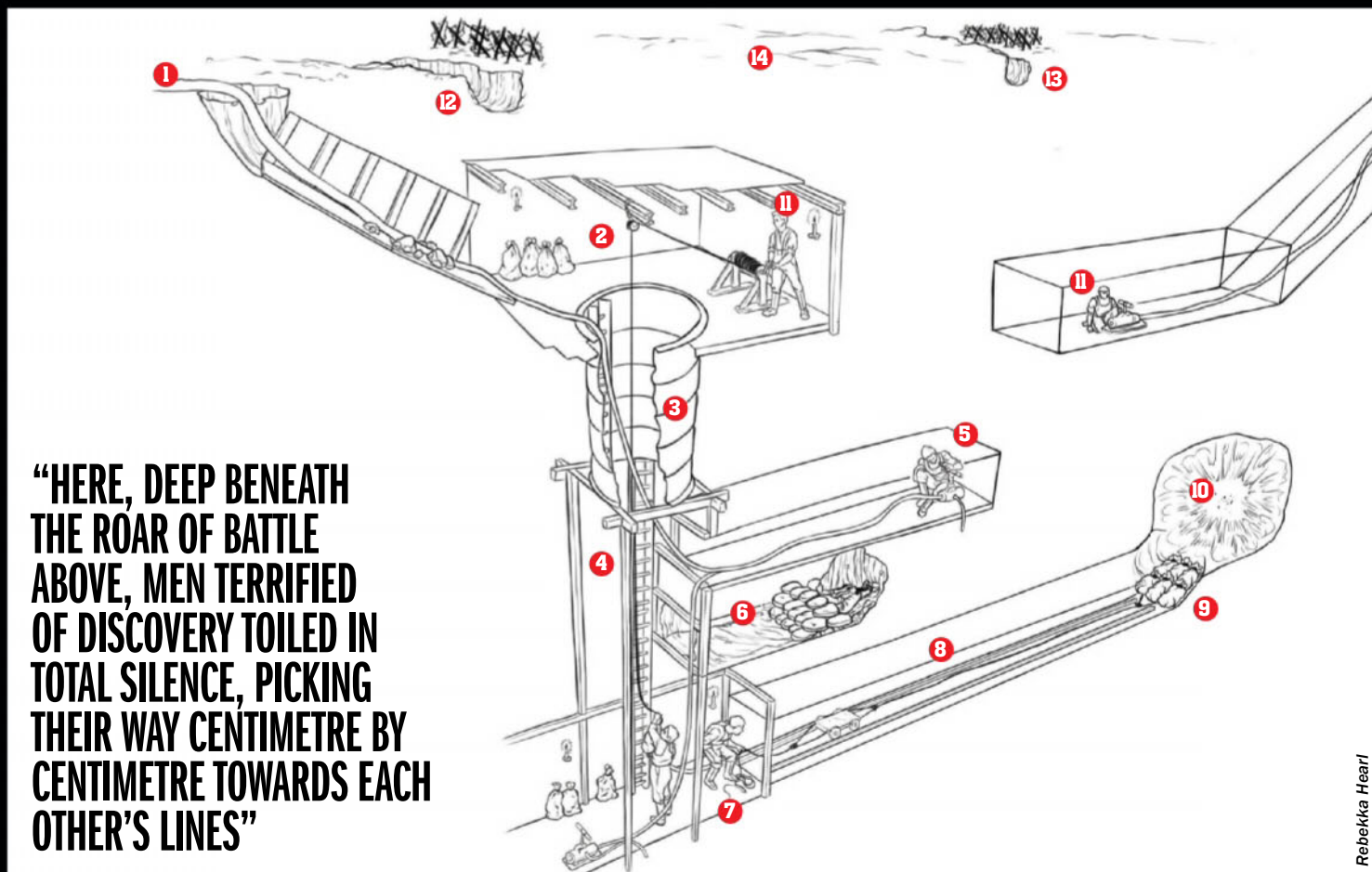
12 British trench

13 German trench

14 No-man's land



The tunnels were built with the same techniques and to the same standards that the professional miners used in civilian life



“HERE, DEEP BENEATH THE ROAR OF BATTLE ABOVE, MEN TERRIFIED OF DISCOVERY TOILED IN TOTAL SILENCE, PICKING THEIR WAY CENTIMETRE BY CENTIMETRE TOWARDS EACH OTHER’S LINES”

Rebekka Hearl



For many of the British killed on 1 July, the assault at the Somme was their first experience of combat



Seen in this aerial shot, the crater left by the Lochnagar mine bears witness to the size of the blast

TUNNELLING UNDER THE SOMME

IN 1916, THE TUNNELLERS WENT ON THE OFFENSIVE, SPEARHEADING WHAT WOULD TURN OUT TO BE BRITAIN'S COSTLIEST ATTACK OF ALL TIME

In an effort to break the deadlock of trench warfare, in 1916 the British made plans for a summer offensive. The generals looked at the map and pointed to the village of La Boisselle in the Somme valley. It stood on a salient in the German line. Punch holes either side of it with mines and artillery then send the infantry through the gaps, and you'll force the Germans out of their trenches and into open battle. At least, that was the theory. The two points of attack were codenamed Y-Sap and Lochnagar, and the responsibility of reaching them underground fell to the 179th Tunnelling Company, who began excavating the 300-metre-long tunnels immediately.

By early summer they'd made good progress, but as they approached a line of German listening posts, they were forced to work even more cautiously. Shovels and picks were

swapped for bayonets attached to shovel handles. These were used to ease out lumps of chalk that were then caught by another tunneller before they could hit the ground. It was painstaking work, and the attack was postponed until 1 July. When it became clear that the Lochnagar tunnel still wouldn't be completed by then, it was stopped short. Two huge mine chambers were then excavated at its end and filled with 24 tons of explosive. A similar amount was planted under the completed Y-Sap tunnel.

Above ground, meanwhile, a giant artillery barrage had begun. For seven days British guns pounded the Germans continuously, firing more than 1.7 million shells. Nothing could survive such an onslaught – or so British High Command believed – and it would be a walkover. The German dugouts, however, were deep, and their

troops sheltered inside them patiently. They knew the bombardment couldn't last forever. They also knew an assault would start when it stopped – they just didn't know when.

Then, on the night of 30 June, they found out. In a German listening post, a Moritz machine picked up a telephone message to British troops holding the line. It said: "Good luck tomorrow morning." With those four words, the unwitting well wisher condemned thousands of his countrymen to death.

At 7.28am the following morning, the barrage stopped. As British infantrymen lined up in front of their trench ladders, they heard two more explosions – louder than anything they had ever heard. It was the two tunnel mines either side of La Boisselle, and within two minutes they were crossing no-man's land towards the huge craters that had been created.

Before they had got 100 metres, though, the Germans began scything them down. Forewarned by the intercepted message, they'd moved their all-important machine-gun defences from Y-Sap, distributing them throughout their line. As soon as the bombardment had ceased, they'd then swarmed back into their trenches just as thousands of British troops walked into their gun sights. By noon, more than 11,000 British soldiers lay dead either side of La Boisselle. The village was supposed to have fallen within 20 minutes, instead it took six days. The Battle of the Somme, meanwhile, raged on for another four months.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE TUNNELLERS?

THE WAR UNDERGROUND WAS INVISIBLE EXCEPT TO THOSE WHO FOUGHT IT, AND ITS HORRORS HAVE REMAINED BURIED FOR DECADES

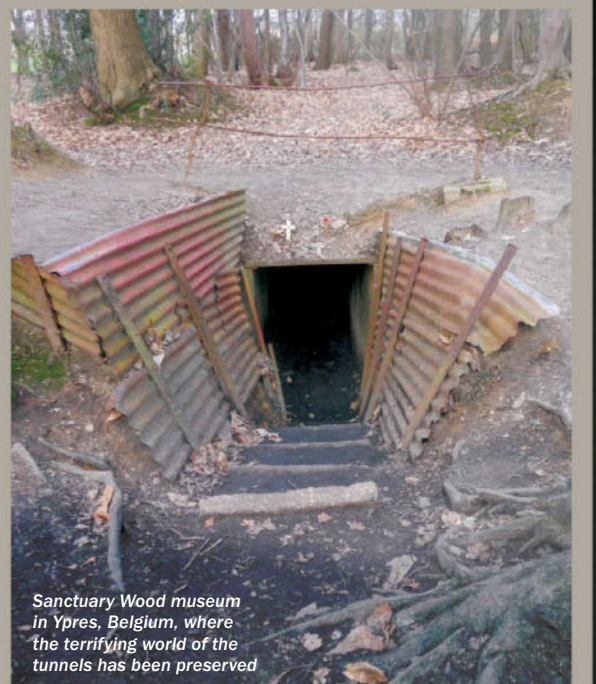
Working for up to 12 hours a day in tense silence, life was tough and dangerous for the tunnellers. Every day they faced the same hazards underground. The tunnels were freezing and frequently rat infested or flooded. Fatigue, trench foot, and vitamin D deficiency all sapped their strength. The risk of cave-ins was ever present, as was the danger from asphyxiation or explosions caused by underground gasses.

Then there was the threat of the Germans. Always listening, always waiting, maybe just on the other side of a slender wall of earth, to kill them. If tunnels collided, it meant cramped, candle-lit combat with knives, knuckle-dusters and

bludgeons. If they didn't, the enemy had explosives. Once a tunnel was detected, a hole was silently drilled towards it, a steel tube called a camouflet packed with explosive inserted, and detonated. Those on the other side then either became trapped, or drowned in mud.

When the war became more mobile from 1917 onwards, the tunnellers were moved above ground to more mundane tasks. And when the war ended, those that had survived were packed off home to their pits and their sewers, while those that didn't remained, entombed forever in the deadly labyrinths they had painstakingly dug below the Western Front.

"IF TUNNELS COLLIDED, IT MEANT CRAMPED, CANDLE-LIT COMBAT WITH KNUCKLE-DUSTERS AND BLUDGEONS"



Sanctuary Wood museum in Ypres, Belgium, where the terrifying world of the tunnels has been preserved

HMS M33

WORDS JACK GRIFFITHS

Take a journey around this 100-year-old veteran of Gallipoli and the Russian Civil War

L launched on 1 April 1915, the HMS M33 was part of a new era for the Royal Navy. Designed for shore bombardment, the vessel and the rest of the M29 Class would participate in the Gallipoli campaign of 1915-16, which lurched from one disaster to another. Despite the British Army's struggles, the Royal Navy made a good account of itself as Ottoman batteries on the shoreline came under fire from the Monitors. M33 performed so well that it earned the reputation as a 'lucky ship', as it recorded no losses in the whole campaign. It then went on to patrol the Aegean Sea, enduring zeppelin raids while shelling Bulgarian forces. After surviving the war relatively unscathed, the vessel served in the White Sea Squadron as it lent aid to the White Army during the Russian Civil War.

After the war, the M33 was recommissioned as a mine-laying ship and renamed HMS Minerva, but with the constant drive for new technology, it wasn't long until it became obsolete. During World War II, it was renamed once again, this time to Hulk C23 as the ship was stripped of its engines and turned into a boom defence workshop in Clyde. After the war had ended, it was towed back home to the Solent. It would spend the rest of its days as a floating office until it was purchased by Hampshire County Council, and the road to restoration began.

M33 is one of only three Royal Navy ships remaining from World War I and the only one open to the public

HMS M33

SHIP TYPE M29-CLASS MONITOR

YEAR BUILT 1915

YEARS IN SERVICE 79

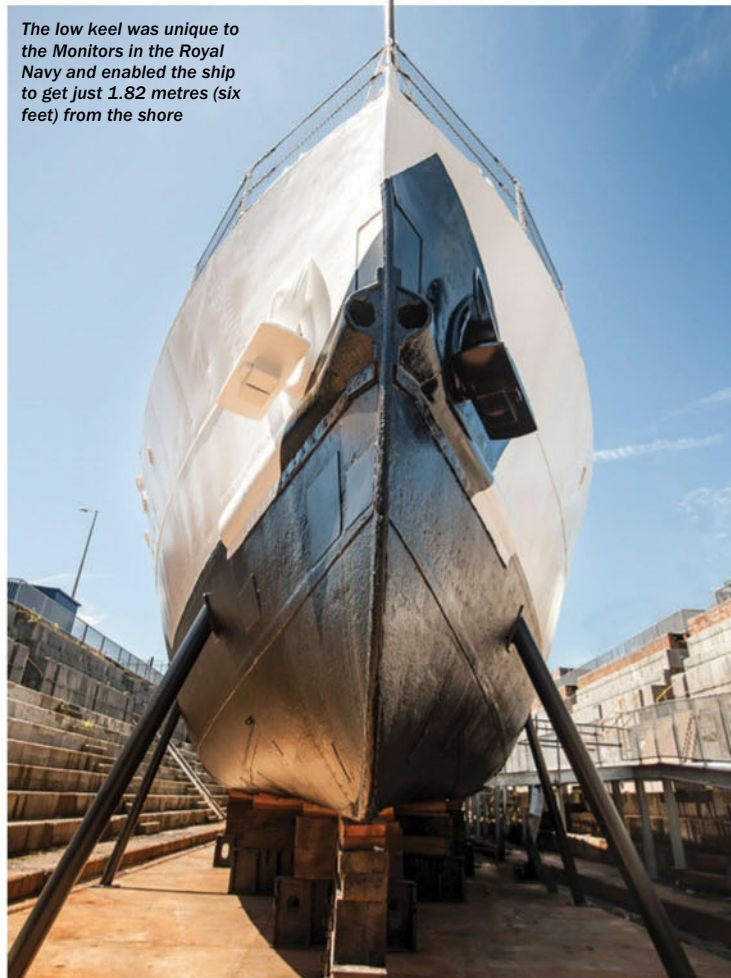
LENGTH 54 METRES (177 FEET)

MAXIMUM SPEED 9.6 KNOTS (18KM/H)

ENGINE TRIPLE EXPANSION STEAM ENGINES

CREW 72

ARMAMENT 2 x BREECH-LOADED 6-INCH MARK XII GUNS,
1 x HOTCHKISS 6-POUNDER NAVAL GUN, 2 x MAXIM GUNS



The low keel was unique to the Monitors in the Royal Navy and enabled the ship to get just 1.82 metres (six feet) from the shore



In 2007, the ship was repainted with the 'dazzle' colour scheme it had in 1918

Below: Restoration work began in October 2014, and the ship will reopen as a new exhibition in August 2015

"M33 PERFORMED SO WELL THAT IT WAS GIVEN THE REPUTATION AS A 'LUCKY SHIP', AS IT RECORDED NO LOSSES IN THE WHOLE CAMPAIGN"

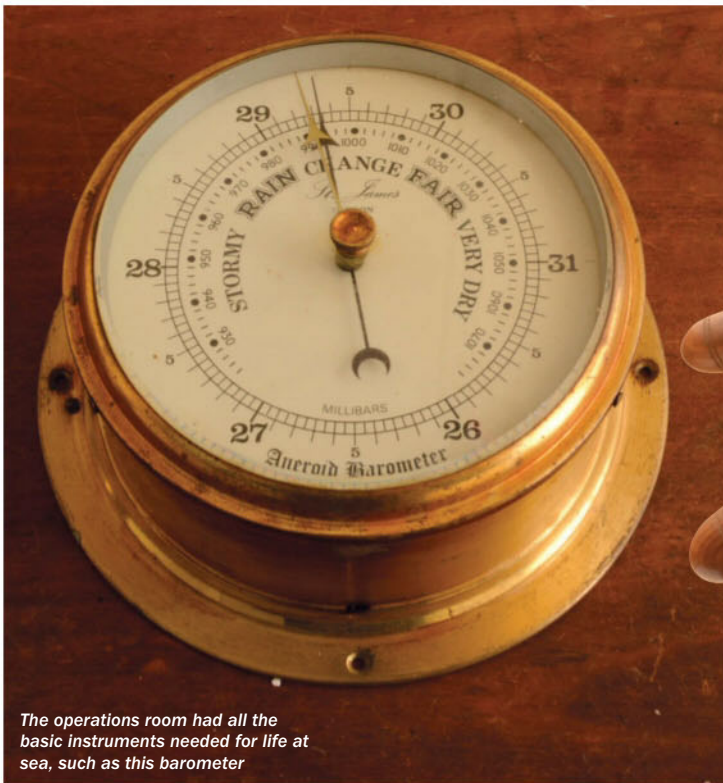


The lack of a deep keel made the ship hard to steer and the propellers often lifted out of the water in heavy weather

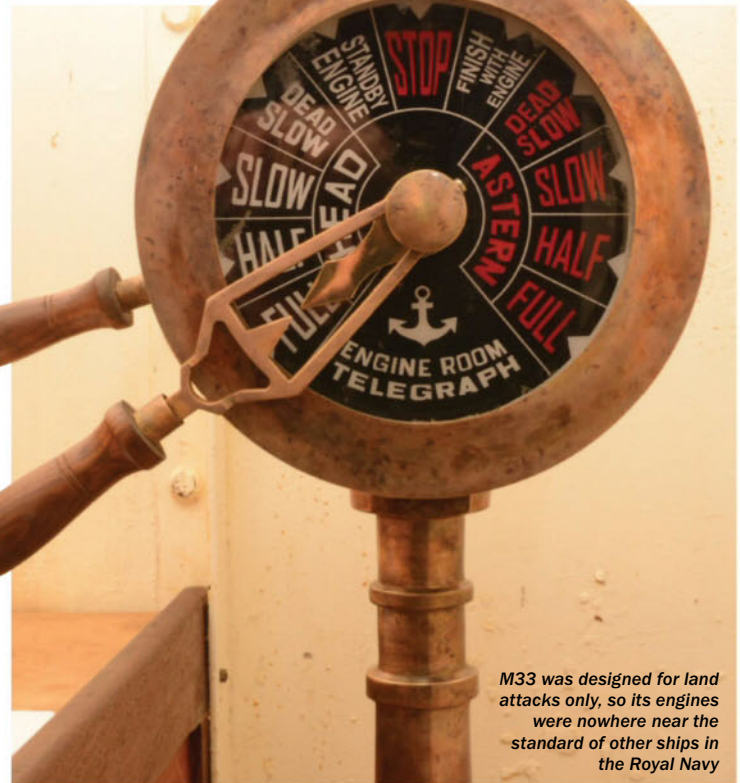
THE BRIDGE

Like the M33 itself, the bridge, or operations room, had a very basic feel to it. Based on functionality rather than comfort, steering was controlled by a traditional ship's wheel on a raised platform. The captain had a 360-degree view up on his pedestal and would be flanked by officers with maps and dials. As it was such a small ship, M33 rolled badly in choppy seas and would not make much headway due to its already slow top speed. The operations room wasn't protected by thick armour, so being up on deck was a risky business. Apart from on the guns, the ship had no armour protection, making it more remarkable that the crew received no casualties during the Gallipoli campaign.

"THE OPERATIONS ROOM WASN'T PROTECTED BY THICK ARMOUR SO BEING UP ON DECK WAS A RISKY BUSINESS"



The operations room had all the basic instruments needed for life at sea, such as this barometer



M33 was designed for land attacks only, so its engines were nowhere near the standard of other ships in the Royal Navy

THE CREW'S MESS

Humid in the summer and freezing in the winter, M33 was far from luxury. The worst affected were the 67 non-officers on board who slept in hammocks at the bow and the stern of the ship. Private Richard Chapple joined the crew in June 1915 and was away from home for a total of three and a half years, marrying his fiancée as soon as he returned to land. Telegraphist Norman Milburn

came aboard when he was only 16 as the British people got behind the war effort. The crew was mainly made up of reservists and volunteers from areas all around Britain and not one was conscripted.

MARINE

The military muscle of the ship, the Marines used the ship's six-inch guns and Maxim machine guns to attack batteries and fortifications on the shore.

ENGINEER

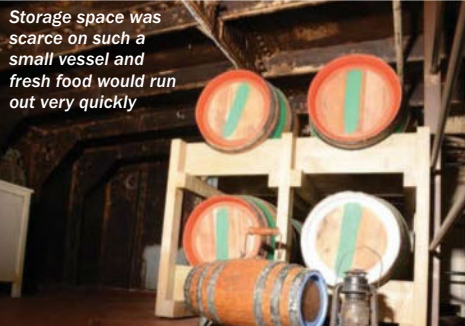
Even though there was no 'stoking' as such on the ship (M33 ran on oil not coal), the engineers attended to the general maintenance of the engines.

SEAMAN

Providing the elbow grease on the vessel, the seamen were constantly milling around fixing leaks, cleaning floors and helping out with the general running of the ship



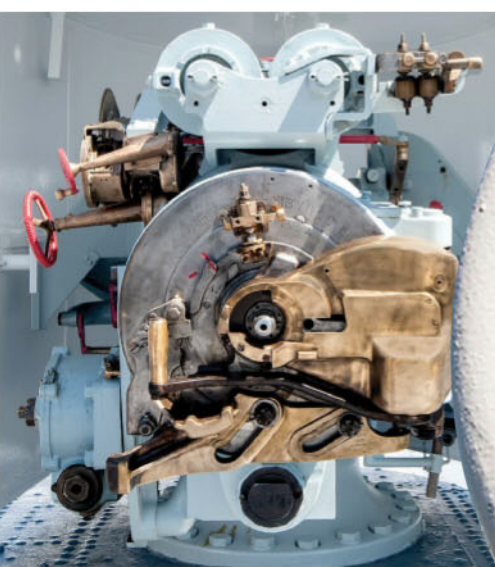
67 of the 72-strong crew would eat all their meals in the mess. The majority of the crew slept in hammocks in here as well



Storage space was scarce on such a small vessel and fresh food would run out very quickly

20 square metres (65 feet) in size, the mess was below the main gun and would shake when the weapon unloaded its projectiles

Right: Monitors were essentially floating gun platforms and nothing was more important than firing the two six-inch guns



Above: The six-inch guns were breech-loaded and, due to the ship's low keel, could get in as close as possible to the coast



ARMAMENT

M33's two six-inch guns were the integral part of the ship. The main guns were actually oversized for a monitor of M33's mass, but this is what the ship was all about: bombardment. Its guns were not suited for battle out at sea but had the ability to pepper shoreline defences and battlements. The Dardanelles, where the vessel was posted in 1915, was heavily defended and M33 performed its role admirably, but it was still not enough to help out the army that was getting massacred by the dug-in Ottoman battalions. When battle got up-close and personal, M33 wielded one six-pounder Hotchkiss gun as well as two Maxim machine guns, which would take out aircraft or troops. A recent study has shown that the angle of the guns may have hindered the effectiveness of M33, but on the whole the armament was highly effective.



Above: In an attack, it wouldn't be long until return fire came from the shore, so the gunner was protected by a metal casing around the gun

“WHEN BATTLE GOT UP-CLOSE AND PERSONAL, M33 WIELDED ONE SIX-POUNDER HOTCHKISS GUN AS WELL AS TWO MAXIM MACHINE GUNS”

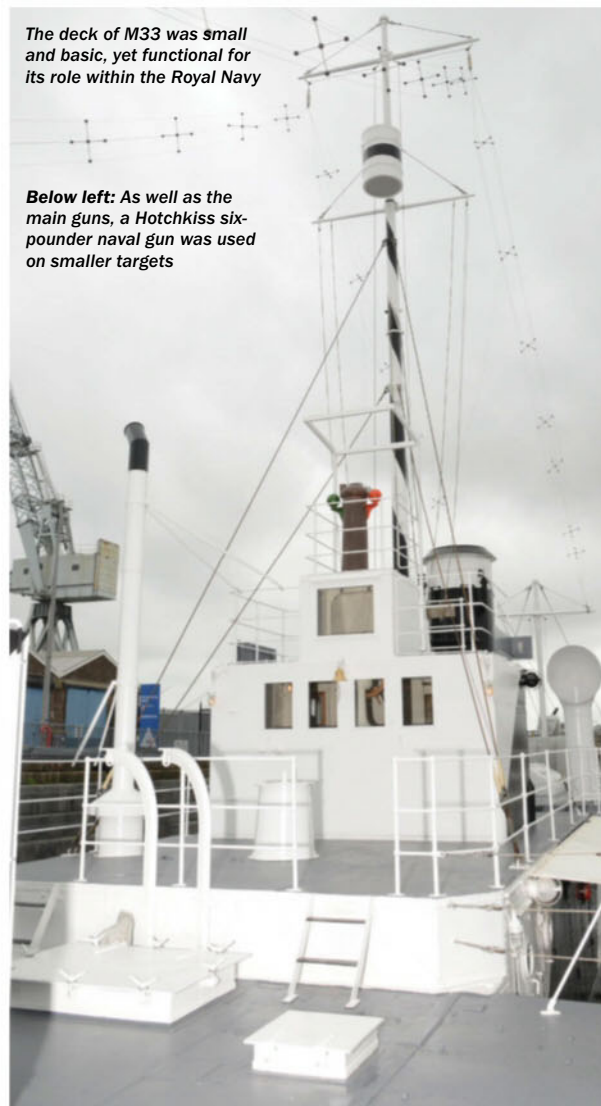
UP ON DECK

Legend states that the first sketch of the M29 class of Monitor was done on the back of an envelope by the director of naval construction, Sir Eustace Tennyson d'Eyncourt, during a meeting with Winston Churchill. Steel built and steam driven, there were no great technical innovations on any part of this ship but it represented what the Royal Navy wanted at this time: warships and lots of them. Vastly underestimating the Ottoman defences, the British hierarchy, and in particular General Hamilton, believed that the advance to Constantinople would be a rapid one. The deck as we see it today is mostly the same and, with the exception of some minor damage, was unharmed throughout M33's maritime career.



The deck of M33 was small and basic, yet functional for its role within the Royal Navy

Below left: As well as the main guns, a Hotchkiss six-pounder naval gun was used on smaller targets



OFFICERS' CABINS

The cabins were by far and away the most distinguished part of the ship. The home to the captain and his officers, the upper deck contained cabins, a ward room, toilets and a wireless room. Lieutenant Commander Preston-Thomas captained the ship at Gallipoli as M33 fired its first shells

at the enemy, barraging Ottoman villages in the south of the Dardanelles.

As the battles raged on, the vessel provided counter-battery fire at Anzac Cove and Cape Helles. It even joined the battleship HMS Agamemnon as it destroyed bridges on an Ottoman supply route, but was in for repairs when the famous evacuation got underway.

An officer's cabin on M33 may look basic, but it was a vast improvement on what the majority of the crew had to endure





HISTORY OF THE GALLIPOLI SHIP

For more information on the restoration project, as well as how you can visit HMS M33 yourself, visit www.historicdockyard.co.uk.

DIRECTOR OF HERITAGE AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE ROYAL NAVY, MATTHEW SHELDON, DISCUSSES M33'S LONG CAREER IN THE ROYAL NAVY

WHAT SORT OF SHIPS WERE THE M29 CLASS?

Five were built and they were all based around the two six-inch guns they had on the upper deck. They were monitors, so were very basic shallow-draft coast bombardment vessels with a flat bottom and almost no keel. The M33 was a floating gun platform and could bombard coastal batteries as well as reinforcements of troops – that was its one role. If it were fighting another vessel, it would be dead meat. It had

slow speed, under ten knots, and didn't carry armour, which is one of the reasons [M29s] were so cheap...

WHAT WAS THEIR KEY TACTIC/STRATEGY AGAINST THE ENEMY?

They would work with other Royal Navy ships as well French ships in an allied fleet at the Dardanelles. [M33] would often work in a force of four or five with monitors of different sizes, and some had 15-inch guns with a much longer

range. It was all about concentrating the Royal Navy's gunfire, as the ships had much larger artillery than [ground forces] had been able to put on land. There are lots of debates about how effective it was due to its low angles of fire, but it was a great deterrent for Ottoman gun batteries to come out in the open. The M33 carried out its role really well, but it couldn't answer the strategic issues that arose in the Gallipoli campaign. The weaknesses of Gallipoli weren't to do with the Royal Navy.

When at sea HMS M.33's crew each had a regular job. Their day was divided into 'watches' with some men on duty, and some off duty.

CAPTAIN
OFFICERS

HMS M.33'S CREW AT

MARINES

ACTION STATIONS • 1915

When fighting, the whole crew went to 'action stations'; many men had a different role that was essential to firing M.33's guns.

ENGINEERS

SIGNALMEN

GUNNERS

SHIP'S CAT

SEAMEN

SHIP'S DOG

WHERE DID THE M33 SERVE DURING WORLD WAR I?

M33 left the UK in June 1915 and didn't return until February 1919. After Gallipoli, it took part in the Bulgarian Campaign and then blockaded Turkish shipping as the British tried to control the Aegean Sea. It was also kept as a lookout for the German Navy's SMS Breslau and SMS Goeben, which were believed to be leaving Ottoman docks at some point. In May 1919, it joined in on the Russian Civil War at Murmansk and supported the White Russians with gunfire for four months.

WHAT WAS LIFE LIKE ABOARD THE M33?

The basic complement was 72: 67 men and five officers. There was one main mess deck with 44 hammocks, as it got incredibly hot with a lack of ventilation and also cold at other times of year. There were no showers or baths and only a couple of washbasins. As there was no way of refrigerating foodstuff, fresh food was limited and quickly ran out. It was very tough.

M33 WILL BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC FOR THE FIRST TIME IN AUGUST 2015, WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING TO ACHIEVE BY OPENING UP THIS OLD SHIP?

We want to bring this unique survivor to the public for the first time. It'll be the only World War I ship the public can go on and it has a particular character of its own that people will see when they are on board. We've taken a very particular approach in conservation so people will understand what goes into building a 100-year-old ship and what goes into preserving it. The cutting-edge media presentation inside takes you into Gallipoli and brings home the significance of this ship.



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STALIN'S FAVORITE

Writer Igor Nebolsin Price £45 Publisher Helion & Company

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE SOVIET TANK ARMY THAT SPEARHEADED RUSSIA'S COUNTERATTACK AGAINST THE NAZIS - PART ONE

The war the Nazis waged against the Soviet Union in 1941-45 turned western Russia and Eastern Europe into the biggest slaughterhouse the world had ever seen. Fighting on a front that stretched for more than 1,000 miles, the killing took place on an unprecedented scale, leaving more than 24 million dead.

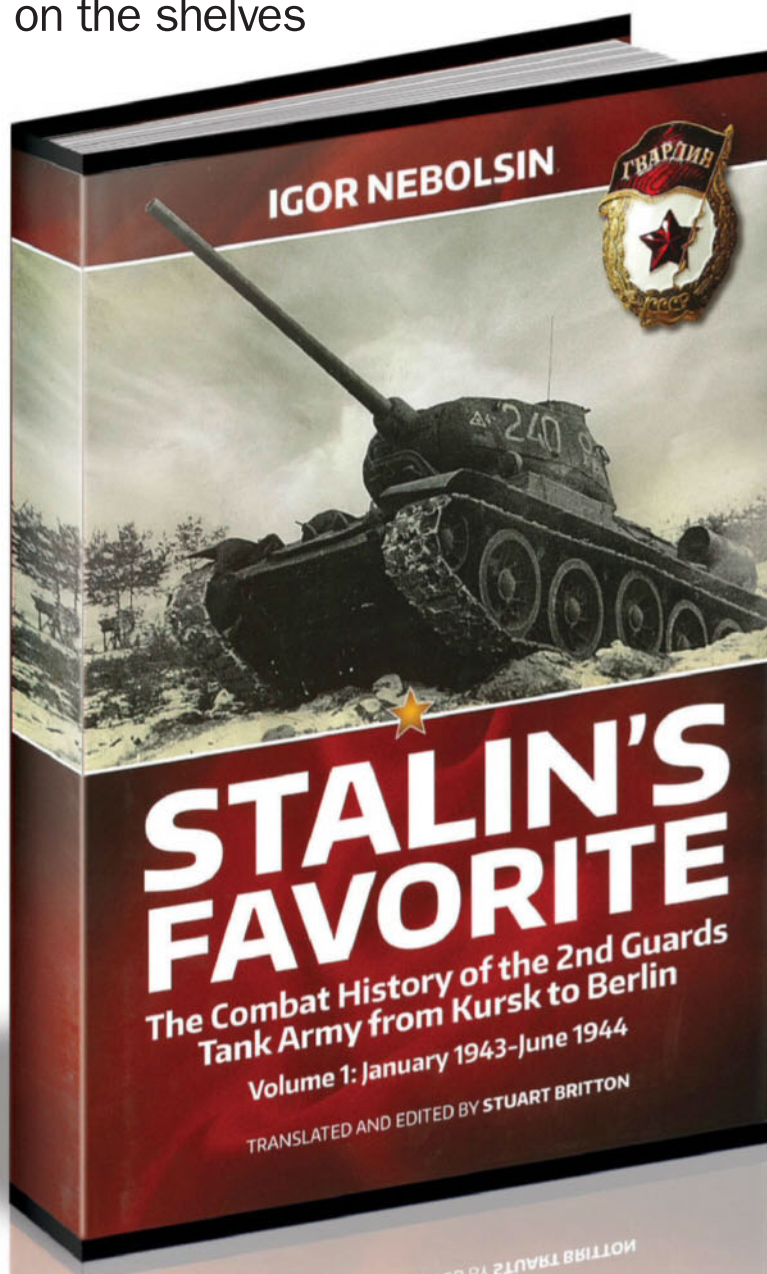
Among the millions of lives swept up by this murderous tidal wave were the 60,000 or so who made up the Soviet 2nd Guards Tank Army. Between them they saw, from the vast tank battle at Kursk in July 1943 to the fall of Berlin in April 1945, arguably the heaviest fighting of the war.

Stalin's Favorite by Igor Nebolsin is as comprehensive an account of that journey (at least the first part of it – this is only Volume one) as is ever likely to be written. Drawing heavily on documents from the Russian Defence Ministry's archives, the book gives us a highly detailed account of the army's war from its inception in early 1943 through to its offensive operations in Moldova and Romania the following year.

Presented chronologically, the official accounts are supplemented by tables that tell us everything from the number of horses the army had available to it to the number of tanks in need of minor repair after a battle. This obsessive level of minutiae, the archaic Soviet-era phrases and the clunky translation from the original Russian can make this book hard going. Two factors redeem it, however.

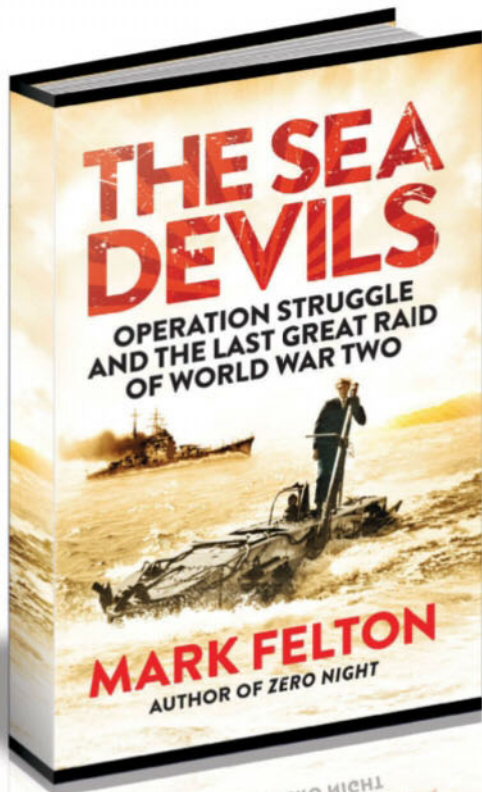
The first is the photography that peppers the book. Much of these are of the tankers themselves. Soviet-style portraits of soldiers striking a noble pose, gazing off into the distance, their chests plated with identical medals: Cigarette-card heroes for a forgotten age. But there's more to these pictures than the curio factor, they provide a human face – literally – for all those horrific statistics historians always quote when writing about the war on the Eastern Front.

But we don't just get to see what the faces behind the stats look like, we get to hear them, too. Their accounts of what they lived through, which Nebolsin laces the narrative with, are chilling and thrilling in equal measure.



“Among the millions of lives swept up by this murderous tidal wave were the 60,000 or so who made up the Soviet 2nd Guards Tank Army”

THE SEA DEVILS OPERATION STRUGGLE AND THE LAST GREAT RAID OF WORLD WAR TWO



Writer Mark Felton **Price** £12.99 **Publisher** Icon Books

A THRILLING PAGE-TURNER ABOUT THE ROYAL NAVY'S FINAL ACT OF SABOTAGE AGAINST THE JAPANESE EMPIRE

This account of almost unbelievable derring-do recalls the last great raid of World War II by the Royal Navy Submarine Service. Just a week before the bombing of Hiroshima, which heralded the end of the war, 16 men operating four midget submarines were tasked with sneaking deep into Japanese-held waters. Their mission was to destroy two enemy warships and sever vitally important underwater communications cables.

If they were to succeed, they would need to avoid detection, Japanese minefields, mechanical failure, drowning and even oxygen poisoning. If they weren't killed, capture would result in torture and – in all likelihood – a grisly execution. The dangers were incredible and the odds sky high, but the 16 men went anyway and their subsequent feats could have come straight out of a Hollywood script.

For a writer, it's a gift of a story, and Mark Felton doesn't squander his chance, instead presenting the events almost in the form of an action thriller. As with his previous work *Zero Hour*, about a mass allied POW breakout in

1942, the writing is fast-paced and cinematic. To achieve this here he has ever so slightly blurred the line between fact and fiction. He admits, for example, to tinkering with some of the dialogue that he's sourced. But so what? The storytelling is seamless, and the courage, endurance and resolve of the 16 heroes at the centre of this history are brought brightly to life for today's readers.

Given the difficulties the crews faced, it's perhaps not surprising to learn that not all of the mission's objectives were met. One key goal, however, was, and that achievement lies at the heart of this book.

The successful attack on the Japanese cruiser Takao in the Jahore Straits by the minisub XE-3 was a triumph of human tenacity, and its account here will leave your fingernails significantly shorter. Both the XE-3's commander Ian Fraser and its diver James Magennis, whose job it was to exit the sub and attach limpet mines to the Takao's hull, were to win the Victoria Cross for their exploits and rightly so. A truly inspirational tale.

BLOOD CRIES AFAR: THE MAGNA CARTA WAR AND THE INVASION OF ENGLAND 1215-1217

Editors Sean McGlynn **Price** £16.99 **Publisher** The History Press

HOW ENGLAND ALMOST ENDED UP FRENCH (AGAIN) IN A LOST TALE OF POWER POLITICS AND INTRIGUE

150 years after the Normans booted down the door, another French army landed on English shores with the intention of taking over the country. At the head of it was Louis the Lion, who, despite sounding like a cuddly character from a children's book, was a land-grabbing royal with a penchant for using military might to get what he wanted.

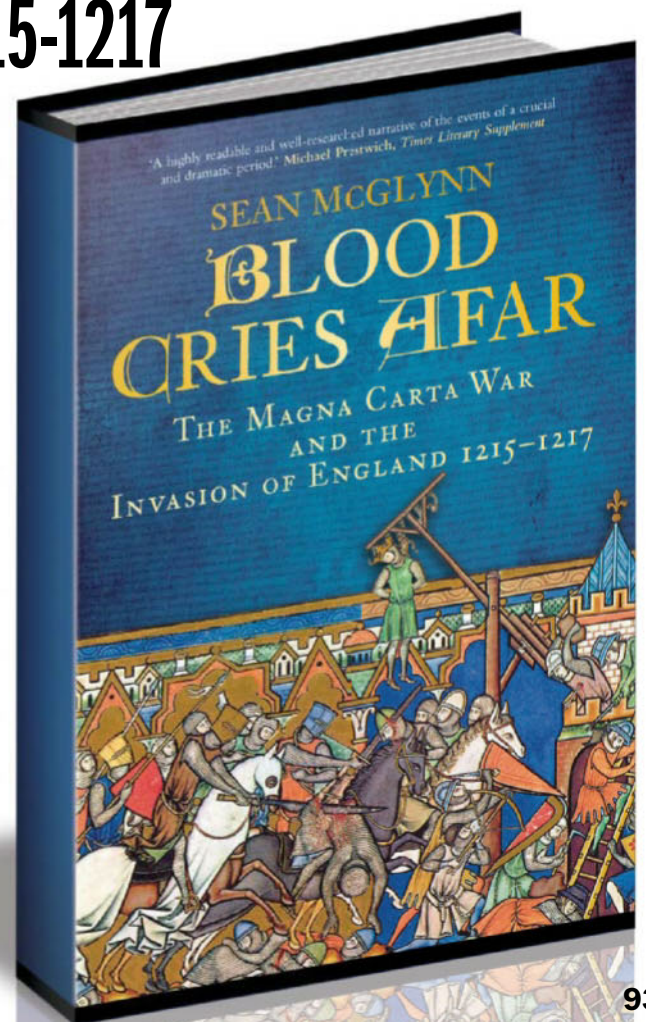
What he wanted, when he turned up in Thanet in Kent on 21 May 1216, was the English throne. Already heir to the French crown, he seized the opportunity to extend his family's land and influence when a group of rebellious English barons invited him over to be their king.

England at that time was engulfed in a civil war. The fecklessness of King John, his lecherous behaviour and failed military campaigns abroad, all paid for by rapacious taxation, had led to a rebellion. The matter seemed to have been resolved when the nobles who led it forced him to sign Magna Carta at Runnymede in June 1215. The document was essentially designed to keep the wayward king's more extreme behaviour

in check. However, the spoilt monarch was up to no good again before the ink on it was even dry, so the rebels decided to do away with him permanently, and replace him with Louis.

Initially successful, Louis and his army unofficially ruled over a third of England for about a year, while resistance came in the form of guerrilla campaigns and pitched battles. In the end, though, it took the timely death of King John and the greatest English naval victory until Drake's defeat of the Spanish Armada to eventually dislodge him.

It's surprising really, given its significance, that this crucial and frankly thrilling chapter in British history is so overlooked. Sean McGlynn's brilliantly researched work is a superb attempt to reverse that. Using ample contemporary source material, he manages to weave together a rich tapestry of the time. We get the machinations of the scheming nobles and unbalanced monarchs, plus intrigue, murder and barbarous battles in all their rich and gory glory. A hugely insightful and enjoyable read.



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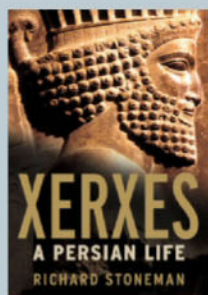
BIZARRE ENGLAND

Author David Long delves into the depths of British history to shed some light on the more unique aspects of our colourful past. The humour is totally dry and typically British.



XERXES: A PERSIAN LIFE

Richard Stoneman takes us on a journey through the entirety of the Persian empire in the 5th century – this is a very thorough work on one of Persia's most infamous kings.



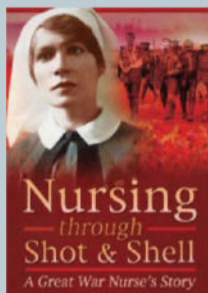
GERMANY'S SECRET MASTERPLAN

Chris McNab takes a look at Hitler's plans to mould the world in his own ideological choosing, including the creation of Butlin's-type parks for his master race.



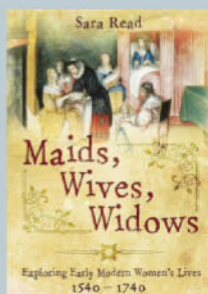
NURSING THROUGH SHOT AND SHELL

This work provides a valuable insight into the lives of the women of the war, told through the diary of World War I nurse Beatrice Hopkinson.



MAIDS, WIVES, WIDOWS

Giving an honest insight into the lives of early modern women, without being patronising, Sara Read explores the extent of women's existence in all areas of life.



HMS LI WO: THE MOST DECORATED SMALL SHIP IN THE NAVY

Writer AV Sellwood Price £7.99 Publisher Amberley

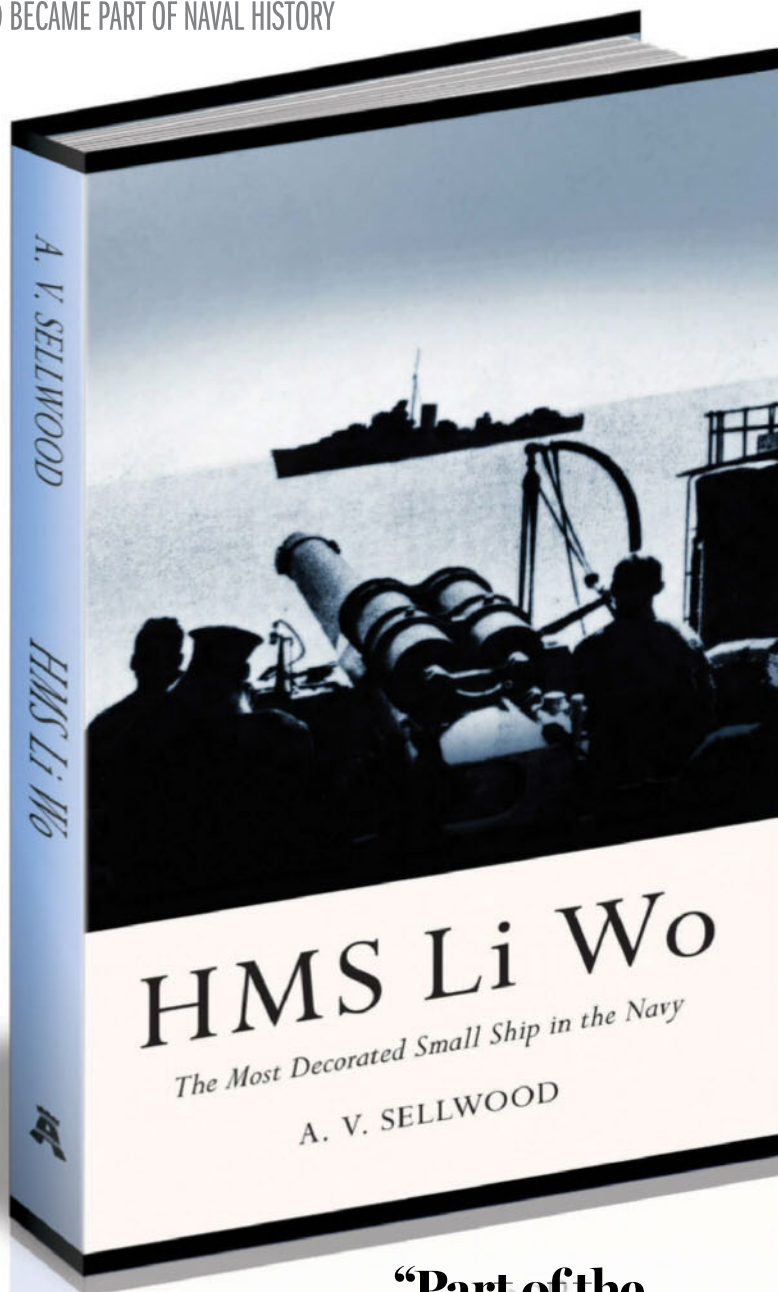
THE INCREDIBLE STORY OF A CHINESE PASSENGER BOAT THAT WAS COMMISSIONED INTO THE ROYAL NAVY AND BECAME PART OF NAVAL HISTORY

Part of the appeal of military history is that it's packed with incredible, near-unbelievable stories. The story of HMS Li Wo is one such story – a one-time river steamer converted into a patrol vessel, Li Wo and its crew were at the centre of a battle of such insurmountable odds that the outcome was never in doubt. That it proceeded into the battle at all is a feat of true courage, mettle and wartime spirit.

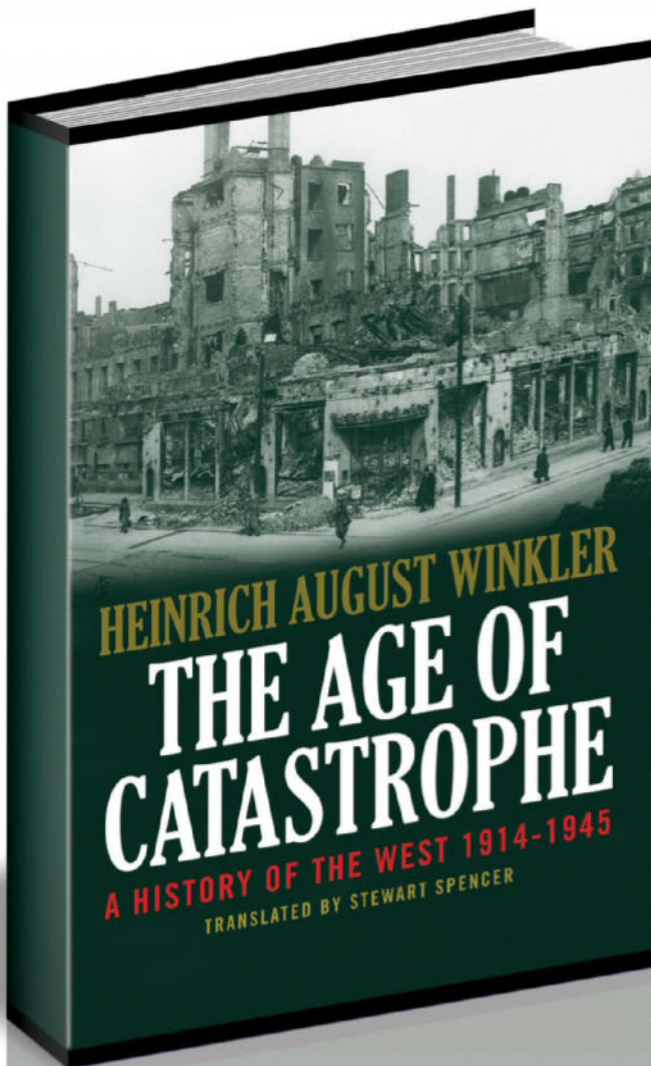
This book, originally published in 1961, has been reprinted with a foreword from the author's son, Robert Sellwood, who explains that his father's interest in the "most decorated small ship in the navy" began after spotting an unusual posthumous VC citation in the Admiralty archive. He soon set about tracking its surviving crew members to tell the story of HMS Li Wo. It comes across like a chance encounter of a chance military event, which saw the boat go into battle alone against an entire Japanese invasion fleet.

The ship's journey before then is just as interesting: after being built in 1935 for passenger service on the River Yangtze, it was requisitioned into the Royal Navy at Singapore. From there it headed to Jakarta, at which point it chanced upon the Japanese convoy as it headed to Sumatra, escorted by warships. Ironically, HMS Li Wo's only line of defence was one Japanese-made four-inch gun and two Lewis guns. Afterwards, the crew members would be awarded ten decorations for their bravery.

As fascinating a story as it is, the book does feel slightly dated (understandable, as it's more than 50 years old). Sellwood writes in the way that turns factual events into fictional prose, which lightly undermines the reality of the story. You may be left wondering what's truth and what's dramatic licence. What can't be refuted, however, are the medals awarded following this incredible event, making this worth reading regardless.



“Part of the appeal of military history is that it's packed with incredible, near-unbelievable stories. The story of HMS Li Wo is one such story”



THE AGE OF CATASTROPHE: A HISTORY OF THE WEST 1914-1945

Writer Heinrich August Winkler **Price** £35 **Publisher** Yale

A POLITICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE MOST TURBULENT YEARS IN MODERN EUROPEAN HISTORY – FROM THE OUTBREAK OF WORLD WAR I TO THE DROPPING OF THE ATOMIC BOMB

This 900 plus-page tome is the second volume of German modern history scholar Winkler's history of the West. His first book covered the history of the West from its very earliest incarnation, through to the revolutions that led the to World War I. This second volume covers what is inarguably the most important period in modern history – it devastated and shaped the world, with its effects still felt to this day. Winkler's undertaking here is mammoth, attempting to sift through the 1914-45 time period with incredible detail. The result is a fascinating, if specialist, book.

This is what's know as the "German Chapter" in the West's history, and Winkler examines how and why Germany broke away from the "normative project" of the West (his previous book is essentially a look at how that normative project came into existence). It is a period that will forever be remembered for its destruction, death and international politics; the book uncovers the reasons for this in analysis

of issues such as national identity, radical political movements and ever-shifting economic power. And though it focuses on the West's German Chapter, Winkler takes in the whole global picture, dedicating extensive chapters on Britain, Russia, the US and Japan, as well as other nations whose power and influence was felt in this period.

As you might imagine from a book this size, it's not a particularly easy read. Not only is it long, but its information is extremely dense. Credit goes to Stewart Spencer for his translation, but the sheer scale of the story coupled with the minutiae of events makes this a significant commitment for any reader.

It is, however, strangely relevant reading at this moment in time. With Germany playing a central role in modern-day united Europe, this book not only reveals the nation's past, but gives an insight into how it took its current place in global politics – and, perhaps more importantly, what that could mean for the future of the West.

FRIENDS AND ENEMIES: THE NATAL CAMPAIGN IN THE SOUTH AMERICAN WAR

Writer Hugh Rethman **Price** £15.99 **Publisher** Tattered Flag

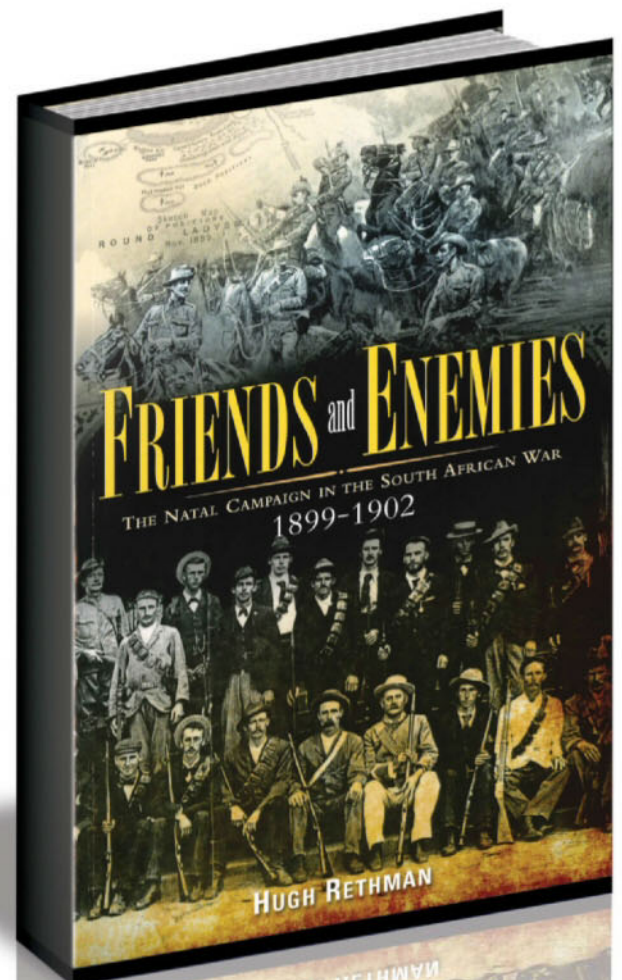
A DETAILED LOOK AT THE EVENTS OF THE BOER WAR AND THE CRITICAL FAILURES ON THE PART OF THE BRITISH FORCES

The Boer War, which began with the Boer Republics' 1899 invasion of Natal and ended unsatisfactorily for the British Empire in 1902, is a defining colonial conflict. While it has been written about extensively, Hugh Rethman's excellent book looks to unearth aspects of the war not yet examined. What transpired on the battlefield has been the subject of many books, as has the faults and failures of those directing the war. Instead, Rethman focuses on what he considers the greatest blunder of all: the failure to understand and accept local advice, opinion and capability. According to Rethman's intensive study on the subject, this error resulted in the loss of almost 9,000 men in battle, more than 13,000 to disease and another 75,000 being wounded.

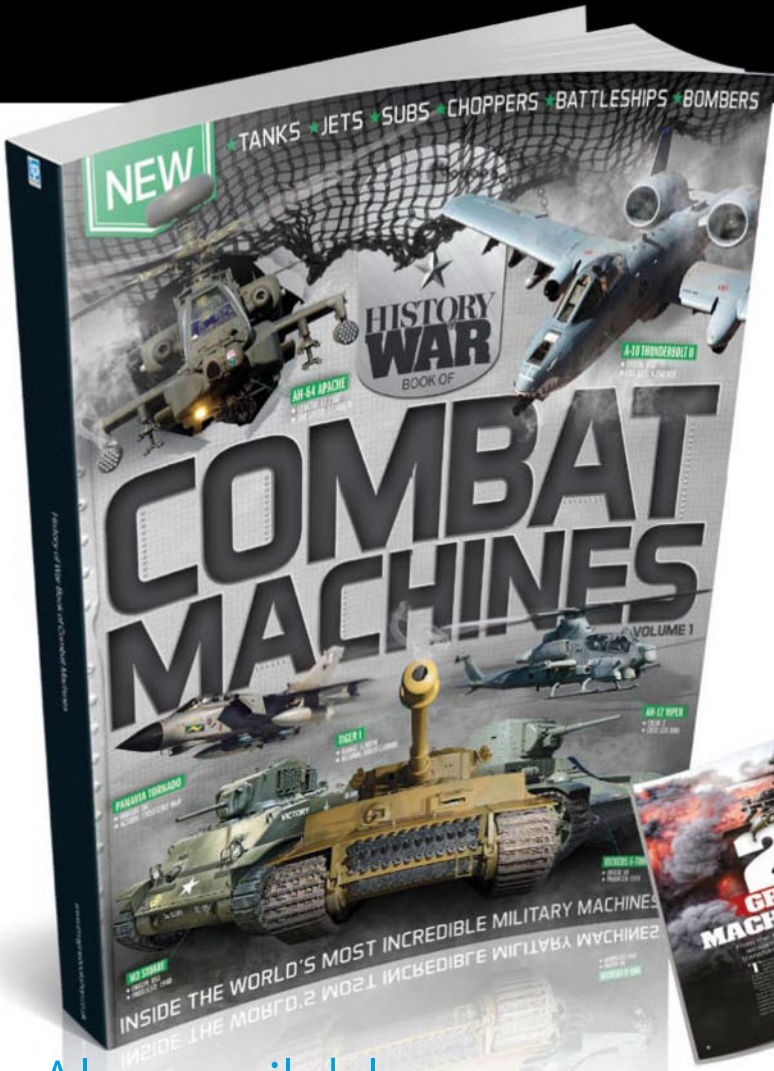
Rethman also boasts another first in his book, including the experiences of people from the South African province of Natal – both military personnel and

civilians, of varying age, perspective and ethnicity. There's no denying the work that's gone into the book. Though relatively slim at 250 pages, it's absolutely packed with detail and experiences. And, as with all good military accounts, it's filled with photographs, illustrations and maps to give some context and provide a real feel for the campaigns and conflict.

Chapters are broken down into key aspects of the war, from important battles – such as the Battle of Colenso and Spion Kop – to the invasion of northern Natal and the treatment of prisoners at the hands of Boer captors. While the book is exhaustive, which in terms of military history can often mean a less-than-easy read, Rethman's writing style flows nicely, ensuring that the story rolls on with few sagging passages. Ultimately, it's an engaging read, providing a fresh angle on an important conflict in the empire's bloody history.



From the makers of **HISTORY WAR**

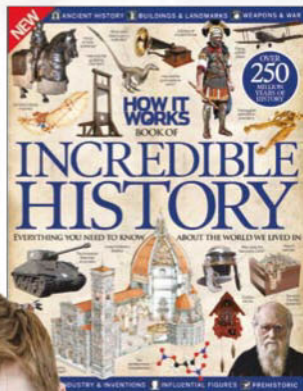
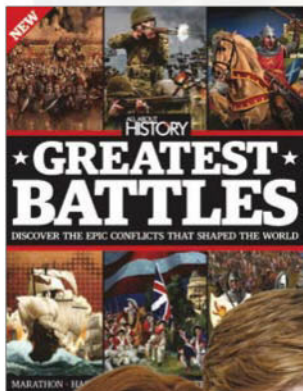


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PARADE ARMOUR OF GRAND MASTER WIGNACOURT

This eloquently crafted suit is a fine reminder that self-preservation and style don't have to be at odds

One of the most spectacular exhibits within the Palace Armoury in Valletta, Malta, is Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt's parade armour. Commissioned within the first two decades of the 17th century, likely from Milan, the armour was designed with opulence and grandeur in mind, rather than practical protection. Not only is the suit covered with intricate gold pattern, it is also much lighter than conventional, tougher armour.

Wignacourt was among the most successful and popular Grand Masters of the Knights of St John, and ruled over the island and the order after his election in 1601. During his rule, he improved Malta's defences against coastal raids and invasion, building a new fortified tower in St Paul's Bay on the north of the island, and Fort San Lucjan, near Marsaxlokk to the south. It was here in about 1614 that the last Ottoman attack on the island took place, when an invasion force of some 5,000 were repelled by the knights.

It was Wignacourt who moved the order's arms and armour to the

Magisterial Palace in 1604. This collection included the knights' arsenal, enough swords and guns to equip a small army, and even numerous trophies of war taken from the defeated Ottoman invaders. Today, the Palace Armoury museum is located in the same building as the order's original armoury, and displays one of the largest collections of arms and armour in the world.

For more information on the suit, visit www.heritagemalta.org

Left: Alof de Wignacourt commissioned this armour from Milan between 1610-20, primarily for prestigious events rather than combat

Right: Wignacourt fought in the Great Siege of Malta against the Ottomans during the 16th century, before becoming the 54th Grand Master of the Order in 1601

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